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February 83

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Editorial office

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Editor Martin Jacques

Editorial office Sally Davison

Editorial board

Irene Brennan, Dan Connor, John Foster,
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Advertising Tom Lonergan

Circulation Kevin Berry

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Contents

February 1983 Volume 27 Number 2

Focus 2

Death in Jeddah ● South Korea's miracle stumbles ● Changes at the top ● French
pragmatism

Features

A New Force in the Land 7

A roundtable discussion with Sally Davison, Helen John and Joan Ruddock

The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp has captured the imagination of the country.
It represents a new kind of politics. But what can — and can't — it do?

Chris Pond

Taxation: a political liability 15

In 1979, a major reason for the Tory victory was the promise to cut income tax. It hasn't
happened. But taxation remains a key problem which the Left has neglected.

Dave Cook and Peter Hain

Proportional representation: threat or opportunity? 20

The emergence of the Alliance has put proportional representation much higher on the
political agenda. The Left remains very divided on its own attitude. Here we present two
conflicting views.

Harold Immanuel

Sizewell Syndrome 28

The Tory government is committed to a massive programme of nuclear power stations.
Sizewell 'B' would be the first of many. But all the signs are that this is going to become — for
the first time — a major political issue.

Doug Cook

Lessons of the NHS Dispute 33

The author looks at the recent health workers struggle.

Channel Five 35

Black footballers — Peter Ball

News on Channel 4 — Brian McNair

A Question of Silence — Sarah Lefanu

The Rise of the Slopes — Maria Loftus

Review 44

Hilary Land — The Anti-Social Family

Martin Weegman — Feminine Sexuality — Feminism and Psychoanalysis

Grahame Thompson — The Lucas Plan — The Unequal Struggle?

Letters 47

Notes 48



Ron Smith, father of Helen Smith, pictured after the verdict

DEATH IN JEDDAH

How Helen Smith died may remain an open question for ever, but her father's place in popular history is assured. Ron Smith has become a 20th-century Hampden, a reassurance to the world that one determined individual can still outface and defeat the closed ranks of authority.

From the day of Helen's death, an accumulating barrier of discouragement, prevarication, half-truth and obstruction created an abiding suspicion of foul play which the recent inquest has failed to dispel. The feeling that the authorities did not want an inquest was fuelled by the sudden decision of the coroner, who till then had been cheerfully holding inquests on deaths abroad, that he had no jurisdiction to do so. Ron Smith soldiered on to the Court of Appeal, who held that the Coroners Act of 1887 meant what it said (not an easy concept for lawyers) and that an inquest must be held. With two judges against him in the Divisional Court and one dissenting in the Court of Appeal, giving him overall a minority of 2 judges to 3, Ron Smith could consider himself lucky.

The inquest itself was the best thing for the press since the Royal Wedding. It is not easy to be sure of their motives. They had to follow to some extent the popular admiration which Ron Smith had by now earned. But

the story was marvellous copy: on top of the lone individual's struggle to bring the facts into the daylight, the story had sex, violence, passion, mystery, drink and death. With each day's hearing more pieces were fitted into the jigsaw and new shocks and horrors hit the headlines.

In the daily excitement, it was possible to lose sight of some simple but important facts. Helen Smith's left arm was fixed in *rigor mortis* in a raised position above her head: if she had died where she was found the arm could not have stayed elevated like that. Her face and head were covered in bruises, and microscopic examination showed them to have been sustained in life. One of them, the result of a heavy blow to the top of the head, had caused a bleed on the surface of the brain which would have produced almost instant unconsciousness; and as Ron Smith's counsel pointed out, an unconscious person cannot get up and fall over a balcony. And there were bruises to the genitals and inner thighs typical of sexual assault.

Equally curious was the evidence about her companion, the Dutch tug skipper Johannes Otten. He was found impaled on the railings below the balcony of the Arnotts' flat, face down and trouserless, his head most probably toward the building, showing that he fell over backwards. With both bodies in a state of partial undress, everybody from the Jeddah police onwards found

it pruriently easy to ascribe the whole tragedy to a tipsy couple falling over a low balcony rail while making love. What were never explained away were the unmistakable signs that Helen Smith had been beaten unconscious and possibly raped, and the peculiar circumstances of Otten's death. Nor, despite great efforts to prove it possible, did the pathological evidence satisfactorily establish how a grown woman could fall 65 feet on to a rock-hard surface without a single fracture of the arms or legs or skull or spine.

By the time the last witness had left the witness box in Leeds, it was evident that the world had been watching Hamlet without either the Prince or Gertrude: by the time of the two deaths everybody, it appeared, had either gone home or gone to sleep except Timothy Hayter and Penelope Arnot — the two individuals who never came to give evidence. In their absence the coroner summed up to the jury: an impeccable summary of the evidence until he got to the bit which coroners can never resist — his own solution of the mystery. Helen Smith and Johannes Otten are making love on the balcony when Otten, with his trousers round his knees, sees his German mates getting into their car across the street. In trying to attract their attention ('Hang on, I'm just coming?') he falls over, pulling Helen with him. He lands on the railings and she is deflected off him, breaking her fall. What has happened, then, to Otten's trousers? They have fallen off in flight and been carried away by a passing Arab who wants his wallet. And Helen's facial and other injuries? Ignore the pathologists who say they were demonstrably suffered before death — 'This is too important to leave to the experts'; assume they were all suffered through manhandling after death; and hey presto, you have your verdict of accidental death.

Inspector Clouseau would have appreciated the finesse of it, but a Leeds jury were less impressed. They found that Helen Smith fell from the balcony, but their verdict on the cause of death was open. However, there has been a happy ending for Hamlet and Gertrude. Timothy Heyter has a steady job in the Far East with the company that was dredging Jeddah harbour at the time of these events; and Penelope Arnot married the son of the chairman of the same company the day after the Court of Appeal ordered an inquest. It is believed that the company is connected with the CIA, but only paranoids think there is anything in that.

John Warr

SOUTH KOREA'S MIRACLE STUMBLES

Since the assassination of President Park Chung Hee in October 1979, events in South Korea have taken an unpredictable turn. This favourite 'miracle' country of economists from the World Bank to post-Maoist Peking, has found itself tottering from political crisis to a series of economic upsets, which have brought many of the foundations upon which the country's earlier successes were built into a less favourable light.

While for most of the world the past decade has been a period of economic uncertainty, the newly industrialising countries (NICs) of East Asia — Hongkong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea — have enjoyed consistently high growth rates. This they have achieved by rapidly expanding their trade with the rest of the world. In all four cases the basis of these increases in trade has been the export of standardised, labour intensive light manufactures, such as textiles and electronic components. This kind of production has been made possible by the strict control, as well as the abundant supplies of labour, well educated by Third World standards. The very high levels of exports achieved have also been partly due to the receptiveness of the US to exports from these countries for political reasons. The importance of the American relationship is particularly important to South Korea, which has received very high levels of US aid in addition to a substantial military presence since the end of the Korean War in 1953.

It was in the late 1960s and early 1970s that South Korean exports really took off; for example, in 1973 exports were almost twice the previous year's level. Two important external factors spurring this growth were the Vietnam War, during which substantial US military procurements were made from Korean sources, and a large wave of investments from Japanese firms into export industries. In the early 1970s the Park government embarked upon an extremely ambitious programme of investment in heavy industries, such as steel, chemicals, cars and ships. The purpose of this policy was twofold: to substitute for imports of these goods, and to reach a higher and more stable level within the international division of labour, by achieving export capability in more capital and technology intensive products. Light manufacturers, which have been the country's traditional export mainstay, are highly subject to protectionist moves in importing

countries, as well as being undercut by exports from countries with even lower labour costs than South Korea's.

To the Western observer, increasingly accustomed to the flood of exports from the Far East, it is easy to overlook the fact that this 'export based' type of development is also highly import based for the countries concerned. South Korea's large appetite for machinery and technology, most of which it buys from Japan, has kept it in deficit with the rest of the world, despite booming exports. Ironically, the import substitution programme has meant even greater imports, and to pay for these, South Korean banks have turned to the Euromarkets. By the late 1970s, South Korea had become the third largest developing country debtor to Western banks and lending institutions, following Mexico and Brazil.

Park was assassinated in October 1979 by the head of the Korean CIA; what was ostensibly a palace revolution was the sign of much deeper troubles the country was facing as a result of Park's heavy industries policy. Because so much money was being funnelled into the collection of conglomerates involved in the targeted industries, light industries began to lose their international competitiveness, and there were already signs of serious overcapacity in the new heavy industrial sector. Concurrent to these problems were a general fall off of world demand for South Korean exports, due to economic recession, particularly in the US; 1979 was also the year of the second great oil price rise of the decade: South Korea's trade deficit that year was double the previous year's total.



In the winter of 1979, General Chun Doo Hwan, an austere military man very much in the Park mould, emerged as the country's new leader. Under Chun's regime, opposition groups have been in many cases forced underground if not imprisoned; a recent estimate by the *Far Eastern Economic Review* put the numbers of political prisoners currently held at 2,000. The bloody suppression of riots in the southern city of Kwangju in June 1980 in which 189 people were killed, is another indication of the new government's approach to internal dissent. Over the past eighteen months students have fire bombed two US cultural centres. In a country where even the opposition has traditionally been pro-US this indicates a change in attitudes, as well as methods.

Since 1979 the economy has been in an uncertain state. South Korea's GNP shrank for the first time since the Korean war in 1980, but has since made a somewhat shaky recovery. Chun's new government has lowered targets for the development of heavy industries, alongside rehabilitating the light industrial sector. All sectors are suffering from low world demand; one third of all goods produced in South Korea is destined for export, and currently world trade is shrinking rather than growing.

What seems certain is that the halcyon days of the pre-1979 period are over. While the very optimistic projects of the government planning office once seemed surprisingly obtainable, now they have the unconvincing ring of many of Whitehall's projections — generally hinging upon the imminent recovery of the world economy. While the South Korean economy is very far from ruined, the sense of the inevitability of continued substantial development is gone, as is the sense of the unshakeable stability of the government in Seoul.

Paul Ensor

CHANGES AT THE TOP

In the first week of the new year, Mrs Thatcher engaged in a widely publicised reshuffle of her cabinet. The main changes were necessary shifts arising from Defence Secretary John Nott's convenient decision to leave politics, and were of little wider importance. Potentially more significant and much less public were the announcements, a fortnight earlier, revealing an extensive reshuffle of the more 'permanent politicians', notably the Governor of the Bank of England and the permanent secretaries at Whitehall, who will remain in post if Mrs

Thatcher is defeated at the polls.

The most controversial appointment was that of Robin Leigh-Pemberton, a lawyer, landowner and one-time Tory leader of Kent council, as the next Governor of the Bank of England. The audacity of the appointment in the face of more competent alternatives led the *Financial Times* to see 'the failure to choose a successor with greater experience and standing. . . as a cause for concern'.

No less surprising, though, was the appointment of Peter Middleton as Permanent Secretary to the Treasury. Middleton, known as an enthusiastic monetarist, was given the post over the preferred candidate in a series of appointments which upset the establishment pecking order.

These appointments, along with the earlier appointment of Sir John Donaldson as Master of the Rolls, again in the face of establishment criticism, were seen by many as symptomatic of the Thatcherite style of government. Having eliminated most heavy-weight opposition from the cabinet, having made moves to set up a high powered PM's office, she was now seen to 'politicise' the exercise of prime ministerial patronage in a clear and typical break from the consensus tradition. Certainly Labour MP Robin Cook saw it as such and called upon Labour to follow her example and make a similarly

'political' use of the power of appointment when in power.

Now there is little doubt that political considerations weighed paramount in the choice of Leigh-Pemberton. He is an open Tory and declared on appointment that 'if you had a sort of scale between the left and right extreme, monetarism on the Right and Keynesian on the Left, I am undeniably right of centre'. . .

He regards sound money as fundamental to civilisation and sees his prime duty in defending the value of the pound and resisting governments that threaten it. It is clear that he would present a real obstacle to a Labour government committed to a policy of devaluation. It also seems clear that his appointment, made without the usual cross-bench consultation, was unconstitutional.

The permanent secretary appointments are, however, of a different order. Unlike the amateurish Leigh-Pemberton they are clearly professionals. Indeed in appointing senior Treasury officials to head Whitehall departments, Mrs Thatcher is simply reflecting their traditional ascendancy within the Whitehall elite. What sets Middleton apart is his youth (he is only 48), his grammar school background and his early promotion. As a Treasury official he has in fact been

engaged in work at some distance from the Government's monetary policy and had won the support of both Barber and Healey. Of the other appointments, Hancock at Education and Hayes at Industry, are both said to be strongly opposed to any move towards a political civil service. All are said to have impressed not through their partisan commitment but in their independence.

If such appointments taken as a whole are not symptomatic of a Thatcherite revolution in government, the spectre of such a transformation is nevertheless real. Thatcher and her advisers, like the Bennite Left, have been quick to identify the civil service as an obstacle to radical reform. It is but an easy step for both to propose the full politicisation of the civil service. The threat implicit in a Thatcherite revolution should put us on our guard. Prime ministerial patronage should be curtailed not utilised for the Right or the Left. Government should be opened up as a matter of urgency, public appointments should be subject to parliamentary supervision, and policy advisers appointed to assist ministers. But the real obstacle to radical reform lies not so much in the obstruction of civil servants but in the inadequate preparation for power. In this, sadly, Labour has learnt little from its earlier periods in office.

Phil Jones

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Colin Welland
on the *New Statesman*

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my arrows. It's the chariot for my fire."

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FRENCH PRAGMATISM

Jean Pierre Cot, who left the French government in December, mistakenly thought President Mitterrand's socialist rhetoric could be translated into action. As Minister for 'Co-operation and Development' Cot's main responsibility was as salesman for France's policies towards her former colonies in Black Africa. He left — all the signs are that he was pushed — after he had made it clear that he did not approve of those policies.

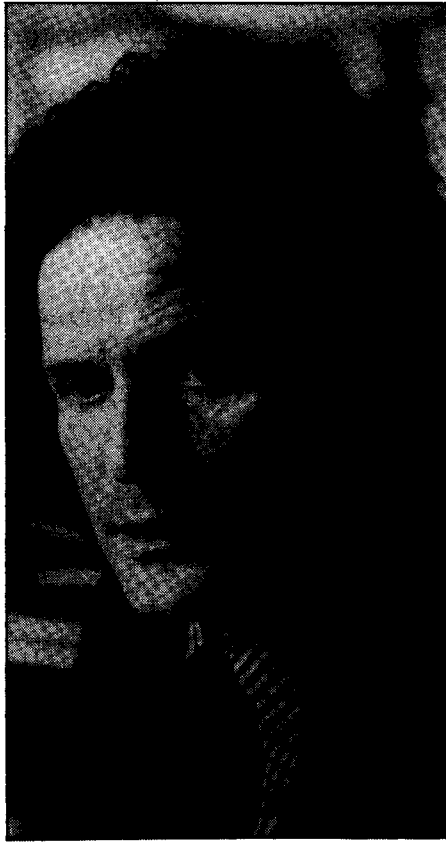
France has a more extensive and more enduring relationship with her former colonies than any other European power. Anglophone visitors to Francophone capitals in Africa are surprised to see roads still named after French colonial soldiers, French people working in almost every ministry and large business, and Gaulloises packs littering the streets. Compared with, say, Nigeria which has broken many links with Britain and adopted a US model, at least constitutionally, Francophone Africa has all the characteristics of a group of peripheral neo-colonies.

When he came to power, Cot declared that he would 'de-colonise' the relationship, true to the promises of the Socialists' 'Africa Project' policy statement. There were scenes of spontaneous joy in some Francophone capitals during the Rose Summer of 1981. In a bar in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, Africans listened to the radio news of Mitterrand's victory and smiled; French residents — who in Africa are overwhelmingly of the Right — shuffled home to their villas muttering about the end of an era.

They needn't have worried. Twenty-one months after the Socialists took power in Paris, it is clear that Mitterrand has opted for 'pragmatism' rather than ideals in his dealings with Francophone Africa. In many ways the departure of Jean Pierre Cot can be seen as symbolic of that slow but sure move to a *realpolitik*.

Cot emphasised four main thrusts in Franco-African policy: self-sustaining economic development, based first and foremost on food self-sufficiency; the importance of human rights, on a continent where abuses are widespread; an increased dialogue with non-governmental organisations, whose developmental role is non-partisan and generally untainted by the unholy scramble for contracts typical of official government 'aid'; and a gradual de-personalisation of the 'special relationship' between the metropole and the former colonies characteristic of the Giscard years.

All of these main thrusts upset powerful



Jean-Pierre Cot

political and business interests in Paris and among the African bourgeoisie, which is tiny but pivotal to the maintenance of colonial or neo-colonial ties.

French industry depends heavily on exports for employment and receipts. Food production — as opposed to cash crop farming — does not tend to be a profitable business for foreign capital in Africa. That capital prefers high technology, prestige projects. Firstly it can cogently argue that such projects should be managed by Frenchmen because of the lack of trained African personnel. Secondly it is relatively easy to obtain finance for one-offs such as an airport or a telecommunications network from the commercial banks, 'development' institutions such as the World Bank, or the French Caisse Central de Coopération Economique. Lastly, such projects give African governments an 'achievement' to ceremoniously inaugurate and point to in later years.

Cot was not against project-fishing *per se*; he realised the enormous benefits contracts in Africa gave to French industry. But he did try to shift the emphasis from one-off prestige developments to more integrated, self-sustaining programmes. This did not please French capital, which prefers to buy, sell and build in Africa, not make long term investments.

This slight shift in emphasis, and Cot's candidness about the role of aid — which broke the unwritten rule that aid should appear to be charity — was forgiven, however. The preaching about quality, a minus for the French business lobby, would be outweighed by the increase in quantity of aid which the Minister oversaw.

But Jean Pierre Cot's real mistake was to keep harping on about human rights. He once said he never travelled in Africa without reading the relevant section in the Amnesty International Yearbook. This angered African Presidents and was an embarrassment to President Mitterrand.

The last few months saw Mitterrand welcome President Sékou Touré of Guinea to Paris and a visit by the French Head of State to Kinshasa, Zaire. Sékou Touré calls himself a revolutionary socialist, but all the evidence indicates there is nothing revolutionary or socialist about the way he operates. Amnesty International have asked Sékou Touré to account for 2,900 people who have 'disappeared' since their arrests in the 70s.

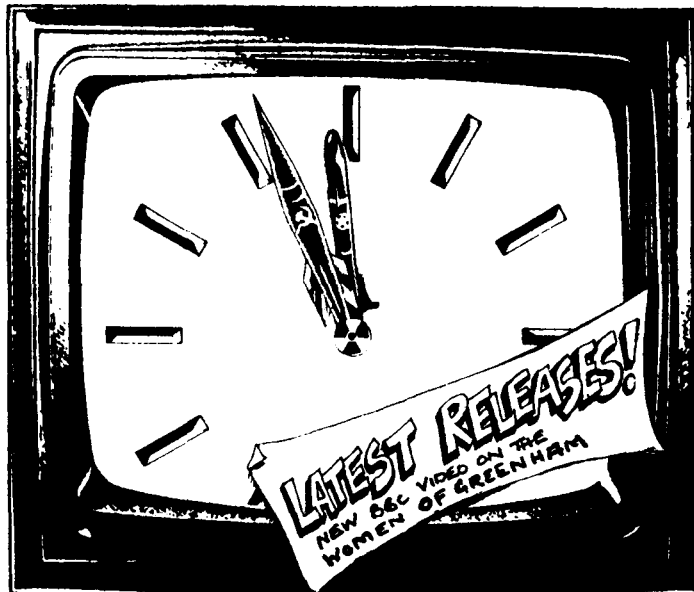
It was thought in Paris that Mitterrand had pulled off quite a coup by getting the Guinean to come; in 1958 Sékou Touré, alone among former colonies, said *Non* to De Gaulle's proposed Francophone commonwealth. The return of the prodigal son to the family group was seen as a powerful enough 'reason of State' to outweigh human rights concerns.

When Mitterrand went to Kinshasa for the annual Franco-African summit, which is itself symbolic of the influence France has on the continent, there was hardly a murmur about the 13 Zairois parliamentarians jailed for presuming to start a second political party.

There were other events which severely compromised Cot's liberal stance. Guy Penne, a former dentist and the Elysée's *éminence grise* on Africa, was in Gabon in December shortly after draconian sentences were handed out to another group who had the temerity to ask for frank political dialogue with the authorities. Perhaps Penne was in Gabon to reassure President Bongo that critical reports of the trials published in *Libération*, *West Africa*, and elsewhere, would not affect France's support for a new railway to Bongo's home town and investments in Gabonese minerals. President Mitterrand was due in January to visit Gabon, one leg of a grand tour the like of which he is as fond as was De Gaulle. Meanwhile, the troublesome Jean Pierre Cot was safely back in the more temperate climes of academe.

Mark Doyle

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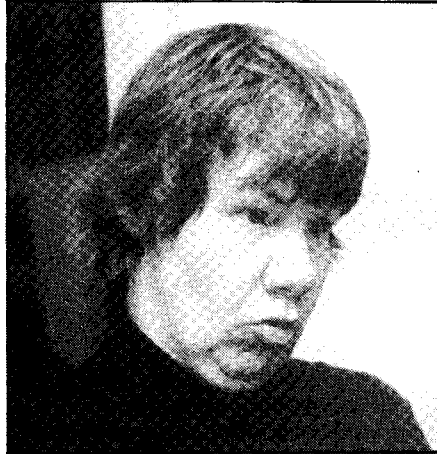
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Peace Camp



Sally Davison
was formerly the National
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A new force in the land

Chaired by Sarah Benton

Helen, why was the peace camp at Greenham Common a women's camp?

Helen The simplest answer is the truthful one; it was women who thought it up and women who actually did it. The original feeling amongst the group was to make a clear statement as women that we no longer accepted that we were being defended by our government's policy. We felt that it was very important to make women understand that and say something about it.

There has been some controversy about the exclusion of men from the camp.

Helen I think it has been largely a misunderstanding. We're not excluding men, we're positively discriminating in favour of women. The fact that Greenham has stimulated the growth of mixed peace camps up and down the country proves that we're not excluding men. Rather, we have one camp which we think it's important for women to identify with, gain confidence from and become very active in relation to; and Greenham has achieved that.

Why the format of the peace camp in particular?

Helen Well it wasn't a carefully thought out plan; it happened almost by accident. Everybody was being completely ignored, so we decided to stay there until the points were made. Initially, we were only asking for a debate with a Ministry of Defence spokesman. We thought that that was a very simple and straightforward request, and we weren't going to go away until we got it. But now of course we've broadened our horizons and we want more than we did before. We want a complete reversal of the policies with no attempt to put cruise missiles anywhere in Europe, let alone on Greenham Common.

Joan I can endorse what Helen said about the essentially accidental nature of the peace camp, because when I first met Helen and the other women, they were asking for a debate. They had arrived there with the expectation that their great march from South Wales would have received considerable attention. It didn't, so they decided to stay at Greenham Common until something did happen. But none of us at the outset imagined that now, more than a year later, the women would still be there. I think that's the thing that has caught the imagination of so many people in the peace movement. It is the enormous determination of the women; the fact that they were able to stay there throughout last winter when conditions were quite appalling.

What are the peculiar qualities of such a peace camp, apart from the endurance of the women, which have been so dynamic?

Joan Viewing it as someone who doesn't live there, I think the qualities are ones which have actually developed. They have come from the experience of the women living there together and sharing thoughts and ideas about actions and about the peace movement. Certainly endurance: to live in those conditions, to stay away from your own family and friends and all that is normal for most of us in everyday life, is a tremendous sacrifice and a struggle. The other thing which marks them out, I think, is that they are able to discuss together actions, but once they come to a decision they are able to carry that out as a group and that's a different way of working and living than most of us are used to.

Helen, can you describe just how abnormal life is there in terms of people's normal experience of politics?

Helen The physical difficulties of living there of course, are considerable, it's so much harder to boil a kettle. But living the

outdoor life, we have become incredibly fit and very much healthier both physically and mentally. And, as Joan said, it makes a great difference that we are able to live the subject, if you like, rather than trying to fit it in to all of the other exacting scenes that people are living daily. It means that we can discuss something until we get it right, whereas in normal groups you've got to leave things aside. So we are able to cover a great deal of ground and get to a greater sense of understanding of the situation very quickly.

Sally, as someone who's been involved full time with CND, do you think a peace camp is something that CND could have made a decision to set up; or do you feel it had to have this spontaneous, accidental quality?

Sally Well it's hard to answer because it happened spontaneously, but probably it couldn't just have been set up. The reason why it evolved the way it did was because it was a suitable thing to happen at that time. But can I say something more about the women side of things? There was a lot of discussion with regard to 12 December demonstration, about whether men should be allowed to attend and whether they would feel very peeved about either having to go and look after kids or not go at all. I think it is positive to have an event for women and it's not an exclusive thing at all. For example, I was talking to a lot of women afterwards, ordinary women who did not go, who, when they saw what had happened, said 'I would have really liked to go to that.' There is something special about a women-only activity. The point about the Greenham Common women is that they've been able to set up a women-only activity which is not in any way seen as something for only feminists to do, it's almost legitimised the idea of women-only activity, so that women who wouldn't normally identify with going on something for women only think 'oh yes I can see why, as women, we should go to Greenham and say something together as women'. That's quite a significant breakthrough.

Helen I was really delighted to find that the activities on 12-13 December encompassed for the first time women who clearly identified themselves as Conservatives; who came to Greenham because it was a women's camp and who will now, when they go back to their communities and have the label of 'communist agitator' put upon them, react very strongly indeed.

What is it about women and peace as subjects that provides a connecting link between radical feminists, communist agitators, Tory ladies? Why that particular connection of women and peace, why this unique ability to bring together women of the most extraordinarily different social and political backgrounds?

Helen For the first time it has become clear that we're really on the brink of disaster. People are having to examine the real problems and there is always that feeling that women and children have to be defended, and it's the women who can see that they and their children are not being defended, but are on the point of annihilation.

But why should women be more concerned about annihilation?

Joan I think it's to do with imagination. I really do believe that women are essentially much more imaginative than men, and the threat of the total loss of our whole world and planet is something that women can actually grasp in a way that men just don't. And women are not so easily taken in by the idea of being brave and

courageous, and going out and fighting; they're not so easily whipped up into a feeling of aggression towards someone else. They know what it's going to mean to lose everything that we value, to lose life itself.

But what about the attitude of women towards the Falkland's War?

Sally I think it's worth saying that even over the Falklands there was a stronger feeling amongst women against the war than amongst men. But I want to deal with another, related aspect. As it came over on TV, there was this great emotion when the ships returned, with 'Rule Britannia' and so forth. But the actual emotion going on was in fact families being reconciled. Emotions were used so that the feelings of joy about getting your son back were turned into this display of patriotism. It just shows you how, although women do have a special relation to war and peace, this can be turned around. So although women are the caring people who are bound to think more about the consequences of war, that strong emotional tie which women have with men in war can be turned round and used to justify patriotism. So you can't just make a simple statement that because women are more emotionally caring they'll automatically end up as being more anti-war than men. What has been significant about the women's peace movement is that it's catalysed that emotion and turned it into a positive force.

It's almost legitimised the idea of women-only activity

When we're thinking about the women's peace movement, maybe it seems a bit odd that the way we're getting women involved is because they're the ones who traditionally always worried about their children. But what is really good about this is that whether you're a feminist or whether you're someone who doesn't describe yourself as a feminist at all but identifies simply as a mother, you have got that thing in common about caring. So we are finding a way in which women of different political perspectives can organise together around the fact they are the caring sex.

Doesn't this lead to something of a conflict in feminism? Many of the images that appear at Greenham are ones which feminists in the 70s fought very hard to reject: the idea that their chief job should be caring and bringing the children up. Yet these are precisely the images which are surfacing, perhaps the ones which are attracting more conventional, conservative women to the peace movement.

Helen Feminists have to recognise the fact that the vast majority of women will always be child bearers and carers. This is a fact of life that's not going to go away. What will alter is the role in society of women who have traditionally been ignored and locked into a cupboard as it were. We are trying to suggest that women mustn't be ignored and we have to teach women not to allow it to happen to themselves. It's all very well to say, 'you shouldn't have to look after children', but a very large number of women do want to do just that. At the same time we don't want to be denied the right to make ourselves heard on important issues because we are doing this very important task.

Sally I don't agree with everything that Helen just said about the inevitability of women being child rearers, but that doesn't really matter because whether you're going to be a child rearer or not, the fact remains that you're brought up as a woman in society. And because it's envisaged that you're going to be a child rearer, you're brought up in a different way, so whether you actually do it or not,

photo: Maggie Murray



your emotional responses are different, and the feminist perspective on that is to say men should be brought up like that too, not that women shouldn't.

Helen has suggested that there are fairly major permanent sex-role divisions in the sense that women will always be the child carers. What do you feel, Joan, about that in relation to the women's movement?

Joan I have difficulty with this one because I am not a child bearer and I'm not going to be a child bearer in my lifetime, so it's difficult to separate people in that respect. I just know, and so I share Helen's view to some extent, that that is still how the majority of women see themselves. I've heard again and again at meetings women saying that this is why they are so concerned about this issue. So whatever we might like to think or believe, and whatever we women want to work for in other aspects of our lives for the future role of women, it's a huge motivating force.

Sally Even before there was any kind of women's peace movement, it was noticeable that there were far more women involved in the peace movement than there were in the average political campaign. Many political campaigns don't particularly appeal to the imagination of women, but with the peace movement there is a very immediate link. It is true that a lot of women experience their social relationship with the world through the family. Even if they've got a job, and most women do have a job nowadays, they still don't see that as the prime purpose of their existence. The fact that in the peace movement we've succeeded in connecting with women is a really positive thing. If you say, 'well I'm sorry, but we want to be ideologically pure about this and only appeal to women in correct ways,' then we're not going to reach women. I'd much rather reach women in a way that contains slight political impurities than not reach them at all.

Helen Can I just come back and say I'm not really recommending a sharp sex-role position that won't change, because the roles are changing. I know a great many men who are just as concerned in the care and upbringing of children as their wives. Indeed at the moment there seems to be a slight imbalance for men, because there are very many caring men in our society and they're falling between two stools: the more militaristic-minded men reject these slightly more enlightened human beings and look upon them almost as if they're a different species, but there isn't a definite role for them side by side with the feminist movement. Unfortunately the men are going to have to organise themselves. So what I said I meant: the majority of women probably always will be in the role of the child bearers and carers, but that doesn't put them in isolation any longer because the men in society are

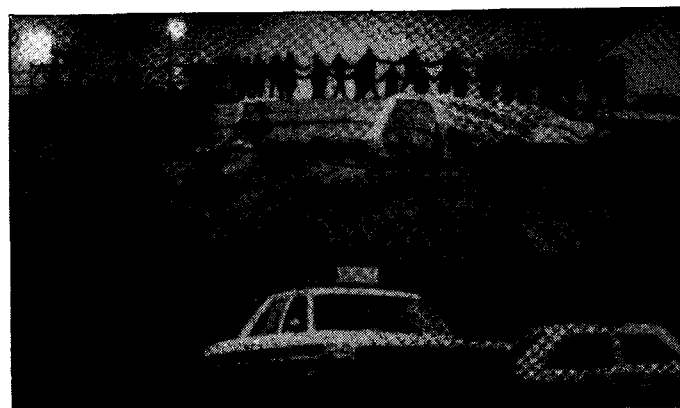


photo: Raissa Page

changing. They're aware of the dangers of militarism now in a way that perhaps they weren't before. But at the moment my concern is to reach out and talk directly to other women.

Do you think that in getting through to other women and perhaps involving them in the first political action of their lives, this will lead to a much wider general involvement of women in politics. And will it lead to a rethink by mainline political organisations, and also CND, as to their method of organising? The fact is that so far a lot of Greenham has worked by grapevines, by spontaneity.

Joan Well I think mainline political parties ought, if they want to have a future, to pick up on this. Certainly in my experience, women who have come into the peace movement have begun to question many other aspects of political life in Britain. Many people are joining political parties as a result of participation in the peace movement, so it's up to the political parties to recognise this and make room for these people, because they are people who have not been attracted in the past by the mechanics of political parties as they are known to us. If the political parties don't adapt to the needs of the new participants, then they will be lost again to those parties. I don't see too much evidence, I have to say, of that adaptation occurring.

I feel that if cruise missiles touch the soil of this country, we've had it

Sally What struck me first about CND was the large number of people involved in it from some kind of moral conviction. I found it a bit odd as a standard kind of lefty, all these people going on about what's right and what's wrong and morals and all that sort of thing. But having been involved with it for a number of years, it's made me question a lot of things about the Left, both the Labour Party and the Communist Party, and this is related to feminism as well. I like to think of feminism as having some kind of capacity to reconstruct humanism if you like, and I think that has a connection with the peace movement. The Left is not just about sloganising for higher wages or the overthrow of capitalism, it's about human values. CND has always had that as a very strong element within it and that's one reason for its success: it can appeal to people's emotions and the way they feel the world should be run. I think the Left in the last few years has moved further and further away from ideas about idealism and imagination. It's become too narrow. I would like to think that the peace movement, and particularly the women's peace movement, can play quite a major role in terms of widening the Left, widening the arena in which politics is seen to operate.

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What feelings do people have at the camp, Helen, towards CND and the political parties?

Helen There's obviously a mixture of feelings. Lots of people who come to the camp are thoroughly disillusioned with politics because they don't trust politicians. I can't say I blame them. At the same time there is a need to achieve political answers and I don't have a great deal of sympathy with people who opt out of the political system because it makes the opposition's work so much simpler. Regarding CND again there are mixed feelings within the group. I personally have closely identified with CND since the peace camp was set up and we've always received the maximum support, in fact all the help we've asked for we've received. I think it was a very brave thing indeed for CND, and Joan in particular, to keep her nerve and CND's nerve in the beginning when we appeared to be just a pack of absolute lunatics, because that's exactly how we did appear. But I'm incredibly grateful it did happen. It was a very important boost to all of us to know that we did have a major organisation we could turn to for advice and support if we felt the need to do so.

One of the things which is interesting about the response to Greenham is the comparative lack of aggression. Given that some CND members have been viciously slandered in the press and a lot of people in other political movements have been treated very badly by the police, why do you think the response from quite right wing papers like the Daily Telegraph or the Daily Mail, and the police, has to a certain extent been chivalrous in a very classic way?

Helen They didn't have any option, they haven't had any footholds in any unpleasantness that they want to portray. They haven't been able to say that we're aggressive and violent because we are not, it's as simple as that. Occasionally on large demos, you do get individuals who, when confronted with men, are less than pleasant to them, but you cannot say that those individuals represent what Greenham Common has become. The press haven't been able to wheedle out aggression; they've looked for it, they've tried very hard to find it and they've failed. They found a band of half crazy nutters sitting there singing songs, winding balls of wool around one another and the fence and so forth, and it's caught the press' imagination. On the 12-13 December, when all those items were put up on the fence, I saw very hard bitten reporters actually crying.

Does it give any insight into the police and state power, this different kind of response?

Sally There are contradictory aspects about being a woman. An example is that on the one hand you're oppressed but on the other hand people will be nice to you in certain circumstances; they aren't quite so likely to hit you over the head with a baton. I think you might as well exploit those contradictions and use them. In the case of the Greenham Peace Camp, as Helen was saying, it's not just a question of the police being more gentle than perhaps they would be to men at most demos. It also means that because the press have certain images of women — they've got mothers and probably kids — you are able to reach them in some way. It comes back to what I was saying before: you're in a world in which there are various things going on like sex role stereotyping and you might as well use these in a positive way if you can.

Helen When you can make a policeman challenge his own role by just sitting there, defying him, while being polite and pleasant,

he really does have to look at what he's there to do. He is trained to deal with violence, with aggression, but on the whole he's not trained to deal with women and he's certainly not trained to deal with non-violence.

Do you think an ethos is developing, in terms of a strategy for defeating cruise, which will become a dominant ethos in 1983 for all peace campaigners, whether they're men, women, CND members or whatever?

Helen That's a really hard one. When the National Front turned up in force at the London peace camp, which is a mixed camp, looking for trouble, the men spontaneously withdrew and the women came forward. There was only one man, who happened to be in a tent, who got severely beaten up because he couldn't remove himself from this aggressive band. The women actually walked toward these young men who then turned and fled. Otherwise, there would have been a great deal of injury because that's what they came there to do, they came there to inflict injury on these namby pamby peaceniks.

Joan It's an ethos which, because of its proven success at Greenham, is likely to be followed by most people at most peace camps. There is a growing awareness that this is a way of behaving which is not only good in itself, but is actually something that wins in situations where the peace movement is forced through no action of its own into confrontation with the authorities. It's workable and therefore I think people will take it up. But we need to remember that peace camps and the number of people who physically live at peace camps, or participate in them, are still a tiny minority of the whole peace movement. So we need to give some thought as to how the rest of the peace movement operates during the coming year. But it's certain that the example of the women at Greenham Common is a great inspiration to others.

Sally That trend within the peace movement for non-violence is growing and will be a strong part of the movement, but it will only be a part of it. The whole point about the peace movement, and CND in particular, is that it recognises some kind of pluralism in its approach, that there are lots of different ways of doing things.



MOD guard attempts to remove Helen John from USAF Greenham Common during occupation of sentry-box.

Helen The most heartening sight I've seen in the last few weeks is that at long last real measures of support are being taken. You've got a Labour controlled council withdrawing a contract for tarmacadam for no other reason than the contractor is building silos at Greenham. This is what we've waited for. This is the breakthrough we've tried to achieve. We are not suggesting for a moment that if everybody came and occupied a site outside the peace camp, we would win the argument, we would lose. What we are suggesting is that if these focal points of very positive resistance come about, they will stimulate people working in the trade unions, in armaments industries, and in all the industries that support the arms race, to take their own form of non violent direct action. Lots of people say we haven't got time, well a year ago nobody would have considered that Greenham Common could have had the impact that it now has had. You see phases in history where you just build and build, then a massive leap takes place, and I think that's going to happen this year.

You seem to see the greatest hope for 1983 in terms of almost spontaneous industrial action?

Helen That, in conjunction with political decisions: the two together will be the turning point.

Joan I don't think I share Helen's faith. I would love to see it happen, but I doubt if it's going to at the level of people putting their own jobs on the line and refusing to keep themselves in work in order to stop production. I don't think that will happen.

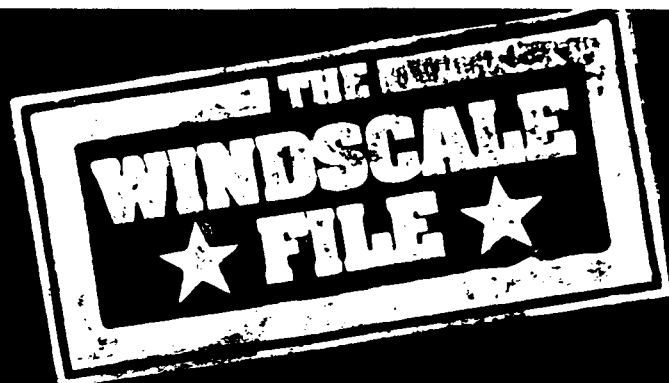
¹This is one of CND's major campaigns for this year — a door-to-door questionnaire on cruise and Trident — *ed.*

Helen Oh Joan, you haven't got enough faith my dear.

Joan I know, that's right, it's long years in the labour movement. The peace movement as a whole and CND in particular has said that work in the labour movement should be a priority and there are all sorts of people trying to put that into effect. What is excellent about the approach of the women at Greenham is that they are then able to say in a practical way, how that should be done and able to say to them go off and do this or do that, and to say that this isn't the only kind of action. The inspiration of what's happened at Greenham is something that's very much needed for other people. I think there's going to be a growth in actions of an industrial nature and the nuclear free zones are going to play a major part in that. The involvement of the local authorities and trade unions is in itself very significant and I do see a coming together and a certain amount of progress, but perhaps not as rapid a progress as Helen sees. The other area which is going to be enormously important and which links very much with industrial action is the political activity surrounding the general election, and that has to be a great priority for CND; to make this issue *the* issue of the general election. I think again the actions at Greenham have added to the possibility of making that so.

There was some impatience amongst delegates at the CND Conference with that idea, there was quite an undercurrent of 'let's get out and set up a peace camp.' To what extent is CND going to be able to persuade its supporters to do this sort of political work?

Joan I think it has some chance of doing so but it will be difficult, there's no doubt about that; the vote was very close on the peace canvas¹. We did a poll of CND members and found that



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only a tiny number of people, about 8%, thought that non violent direct action was the priority of CND, although the great majority were in enthusiastic support of others doing it. The vast majority of people in CND said their priority was educational work, consciousness raising and information. I think we've got to go back to the membership and say that's what you said you were prepared to do, now this is the opportunity to do it in the most constructive way. The majority of people will not go into peace camps. And so we really have to ask the membership to come out and make their commitment as great as the women's has been, and if that means really boring footslogging then that's what they ought to be doing.

Helen The peace camps, in particular the women's peace camp, have come to very positive decisions on the next general election. We will stand as independent candidates against all the rightwing elements at the general election under the ticket 'women for life on earth'.

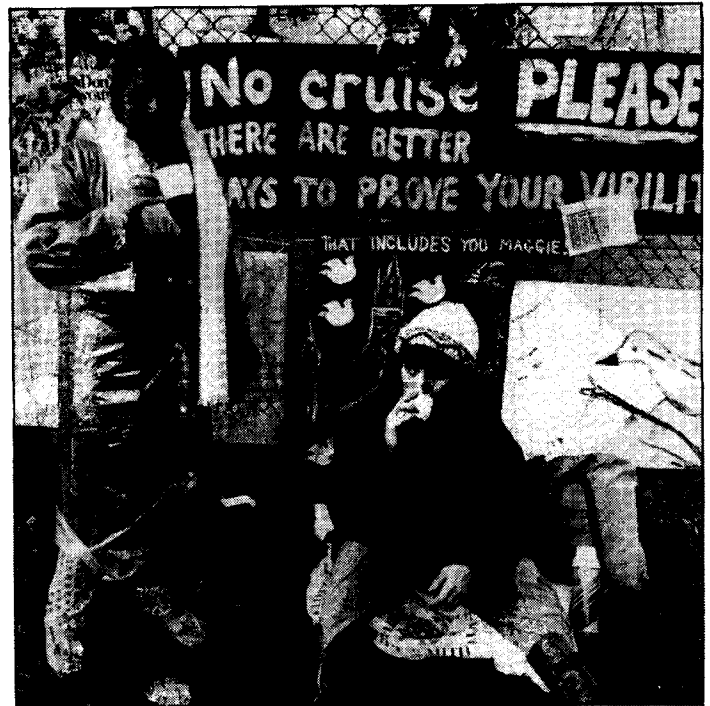
But don't you think there's a difference between, say, Greenham Common, where you are all together day and night and the press are sympathetic, and women being isolated constituency by constituency, and where therefore the response will be much less sympathetic?

Helen I don't think so. Jean Hutchinson is standing against Dennis Healey in Leeds, and she comes from Leeds, so she won't be isolated for two reasons: she'll have the weight of the peace camps behind her and she's a local woman. The whole thing will develop its own momentum. It's going to give a few politicians heart attacks, non violent heart attacks.

Joan That particular aspect of the women's peace camp activity will create some problems for local CND groups and certainly for local Labour supporters who will find themselves in some dilemma as to who they work for and with. But again I think it's the tolerance and broad base of the peace movement that must be used to enable us to stay together, no matter what the differences in tactics. CND would not support that kind of strategy, we have never supported it in the past, we would not have CND candidates fighting a general election. Rather our policy is to make the issue a prime one of the election and to do that at constituency level, to throw all our campaigning energies into that objective.

Sally The basic problem here is what you do when you know you've got the majority of the population behind you, and yet the chances are that the general election will not allow that majority view to be expressed. Even with the Labour Party, for example, you've got a large number of candidates who aren't going to stand on the platform which the conference adopted. The reason for the growth in the desire for action of some kind, wanting in some way to stand up and be counted which is part of the Greenham feeling, is that people feel so frustrated with the political system. People are trying to find answers to the problem of what you do when the electoral system is not very democratic.

It's quite interesting for the Left, because it has tended to see things in terms of more traditional mass action; that industrial muscle will bring down the government, like the miners' strike. But with something like cruise missiles you can't really do that, because they are built in the US and while UCATT could boycott all work on military sites, for example, it could still be done by using blackleg labour and that sort of thing. So you can't actually say: here is the focal point of the struggle around cruise missiles. Consequently, people are looking around for different ways to express that democratic opposition.



Helen Once you've convinced an individual that they can take on the state by simply not co-operating with it in its policies, you've gone a long way to looking in the right direction. And that has come about in the peace camps where there are a lot of people who are now looking to themselves to find answers. They're not looking to politicians, to leaders of peace movements or anybody else, they're looking to their own positive contribution to try to find an answer.

Joan I think the Labour Party is likely to fight an election on a very straight unilateralist ticket, and I doubt very much if the Labour right wingers are going to make their own positions clear to the electorate. Dennis Healey, of course, is not prepared to come out and say he's a unilateralist or make any concessions to unilateralism as such, but he is saying he's very much in favour of disarmament and he's going around trying to present himself as a very active seeker after peace. There's been a tremendous change over just the last few months even.

Helen Very recently we've heard that the missiles could be in position by April. So a lot of what we've discussed doesn't have a great deal of bearing on how we will have to act, because I don't think the election will have taken place before we have to face this problem. You were asking how one stopped the siting of missiles, and none of us have got the perfect answer to that. But the complete occupation of Greenham Common as a site is one of the ways to stop them actually putting these missiles there, because even when they fly them in they've got to land. If they're faced with hundreds of thousands of women and children sitting on the ground underneath their landing craft they're going to have problems.

Sally Although that sounds great, my feeling is that if we haven't got the kind of popular support which is going to defeat the Tories and bring in some sort of government which is going to do something about cruise missiles (and I think it should be said that one possibility might be a coalition government which included the Liberals and SDP, because both those parties certainly have moved

and will continue to move more in support of nuclear disarmament) then equally I don't think we will be capable of the kind of prolonged mass activity at Greenham which can actually stop the missiles arriving.

Helen I don't think the attitude is like that Sally, because the awareness is growing that this is definitely a last chance, life or death situation.

A recent opinion poll showed that people still put unemployment far and away as their highest concern and amongst those who now list defence as one of their concerns, Tory supporters are much more numerous than Labour. Do you think there is a danger that peace is something that concerns everybody but is only a priority for a narrow range of people when it comes to deciding how to vote? If, for example, you live in Brixton or Chapeltown in Leeds or the Gorbals in Glasgow, you simply can't understand what all the fuss is about when you're daily faced by crime, crumbling housing and that sort of thing?

Helen But they are affected by what's happening and I think the issues are getting through to people who are worried about unemployment, because ultimately they're going to have to face up to exactly what their priorities are: are they going to stay alive to worry about being unemployed or are they going to be vapourised, because that's the choice they're going to be presented with.

Joan The other point about that poll was that disarmament was the subject on which people were most likely to change their votes; I took that to be the most significant thing, after all, it's never been an issue in elections. I see it as the job of the peace movement to make sure that it becomes the dominant issue, because then, politically, you really are playing for very high stakes. If people will switch, and the political parties can see that, and you can make it the biggest issue, then we become a very significant political force. That's what the peace movement's got to do in electoral terms.

I am not convinced about cruise missiles coming in prior to a general election. But if it did happen, then as a peace movement and CND in particular, we've got to be able to see our way through that situation. If they are sited, then we have to have a strategy that enables us to continue to campaign even if that has happened. You might actually fight an election in which it was easier to make cruise missiles and the new generation of nuclear weapons the major issue. Because then you'll be forcing political parties to say this was not a democratic decision, it was not put to the electorate. And you will have at least the Labour Party, but hopefully perhaps other parties as well, actually going out and saying: they're there, but we're going to get rid of them: we're going to send them back. So I don't see the siting of cruise missiles in quite the same make or break way that Helen does. And I agree with Sally that there's a danger, if you do take that position, you might as a movement not see the way past that first hurdle. Obviously it would be a setback, but it's something that would have to be overcome, because we're for unilateral nuclear disarmament and that means much more than cruise missiles.

Helen seems to see the ultimate choice as are you for life or death. Do you also see it in the same way and is there a problem for a movement that's based on saying 'it is life or death' sustaining that degree of anxiety and apocalypticism for a long time?

Sally There is a danger by going over the top and saying the only issue of the election is life or death, that people will stop listening to you. This is where I think there's a contribution that socialists

and the labour movement can make to the peace campaign which is its own special contribution, in the same way as the peace camps make their special contribution. That contribution is patience based on years of experience of struggle and trying to change government policies. So if there is a defeat over one particular issue, you don't think 'oh my god, that's the end of it', but you just carry on and say; 'well we changed public opinion to a certain extent, therefore it's possible to change it some more. We'll carry on trying to win people to support us'. So what I would really love to see is some kind of synthesis between the kind of old socialists who will slog on until they die and then get a mention in the *Morning Star* and the people who come along fairly new maybe, who say, 'oh yes, we've got the answers and that will be it'. If there could be some kind of synthesis between those two ways of looking at things, so it could combine the realism with the excitement, that's what I'd like to see.

Helen We have almost run out of time. We haven't got years and years to win this one and that's why I feel that you have to go to the electorate on a life or death issue, because that's what cruise missiles actually represent to the people of this country. If they're sited here, the British government won't have any control over them, the Americans will control them and, I think, use them. So we haven't got time to think in terms of strategies of what we'll do when they're here. As far as I see it, we've only got one hope of survival at all, and that is to prevent those weapons from coming here. Maybe I've got it completely wrong, maybe I shouldn't burden other people with my pessimism, but I feel that if cruise missiles touch the soil of this country, we've had it. I don't know how you're going to convince the Soviet Union that those weapons sitting here aren't going to be used against them. If I believed that you could plan beyond the siting of cruise missiles, I wouldn't be working quite as frantically as I am at the moment. I think it's a false lifeline that's being offered and I reject it out of hand.

Joan, does your campaign take a different form or have different priorities?

Joan No, I just disagree with Helen's analysis. I don't think that the cruise missiles as such will result by themselves in a nuclear exchange. Cruise missiles are part of a build up, of an attempt by the US to gain nuclear superiority, and nobody can quite gauge how quickly they will get in a position where they think they are superior, and whether they might chance their arm. I see it as part of a strategy, but I don't see it as something which by itself, by the very siting of those missiles, will bring about a nuclear war. But I

**there will only be one end to the campaign,
and if there is failure then we will have a
nuclear war**

do see us as on course for a nuclear war. So I can't imagine myself as part of an active socialist organisation, as I have been in the Labour Party and the wider movement, as ever being in a position to look back on our time, as socialists have looked back on previous struggles, and say, 'well we made it so far, but we couldn't go any further, so the campaign died and something else came in its place'. I see this campaign as one in which we do ultimately win or lose. Essentially I'm just disagreeing with Helen about the analysis and about the time-scale. I think we've got longer than 1983, but that it is a matter of years, and there will only be one end to the campaign, and if there is failure then we will have a nuclear war.

Chris Pond Taxation: a political liability

Before the last election the Conservatives promised 'to cut income tax—leave more money in your pocket (and) free the lowest paid from income tax altogether'. The promise of tax cuts certainly won many votes, and may even have been decisive in determining the outcome of the election itself. But for the bulk of the population, the promised tax cuts have yet to materialise. Direct deductions from the pay packet, in the form of income tax and national insurance contributions alone, now take 12% more of the average wage-earner's income, in addition to the extra VAT, local rates and other indirect taxes which have been imposed since Thatcher came to power. Overall, the tax burden has increased steadily, rising from 36½% of the nation's income (GDP at market prices) in the Government's first year to almost 40% today.

Not surprisingly, many Tory backbenchers are becoming increasingly nervous about the electoral consequences of this situation, and the Chancellor is under heavy pressure to introduce pre-election tax cuts in the Budget this spring. But any such cuts will have to be very large indeed if the Tories are to be able to go into the election claiming that the tax burden is lower than when they took office. Why have the Government failed so miserably to carry out their central pre-election pledge? In characteristic style, Thatcher is once again trying to scapegoat the poor and the welfare state for this failure, claiming that taxes could have been cut if she had been allowed to cut benefit levels still further. A more credible explanation is that the recession, made worse by the Government's economic policies, has increased public spending not on the *level* of benefits but on the numbers dependent on them. Mass unemployment is one of the most expensive state spending programmes ever devised.

While the cost of unemployment and the recession helps to explain why the overall level of taxation has increased, the burden of that taxation has not been evenly distributed. Indeed, there has been a substantial *shift* since 1979. While direct taxes have increased by 12% for a two child family on the average wage, they have increased by 25% for a similar family on low earnings. Meanwhile, Mrs Thatcher has been faithful in her promise of tax cuts for some groups in the population. Those with earnings already five times the average have enjoyed a reduction of 11% in the proportion of their income paid in tax, while those on ten times the average wage now pay 21% less tax than before the last election. Taxes on company profits and

on personal wealth have also been pared to a minimum. Ordinary working people have been left to pick up the bill.

So taxation is likely once again to be a central election issue, with the Labour Party doing its best to highlight Thatcher's broken promises. Meanwhile, the Tories will offer the prospect of a further unravelling of the welfare state and easing of the tax burden which they claim it will allow. They will point to the economic and social policies of the Opposition with a warning that still higher taxes would be needed to finance them. It will not be sufficient for the Government's opponents merely to hope that, once people realise they have been hoodwinked on taxation, they will vote Thatcher out of office. They must ask themselves why the Conservatives were able to mobilise so much working class support around a programme of promised tax cuts in the first place.

Rising level of taxation

The Left tend to view taxation as a technical matter, best left to economists and accountants, and of little political significance. So they have paid little attention to the way in which the tax burden has changed since the war. Thirty years ago income tax was still largely irrelevant to the great majority of working people. In the mid 50s a two child family on the average wage would have paid no income tax at all, and they would have had to be earning almost twice the average before they started to pay tax at a rate equivalent to the current standard rate of 30p in the £. But during the 60s the burden of wage taxation began to rise, and by 1964 almost 10% of the average wage-earning family's pay was taken in tax, a proportion which nearly doubled during the 'Wilson years' that followed. Further increases in wage taxation during the 1970s meant that by the time of the 1979 election direct deductions already took almost a quarter (24%) of the average wage. So while a promise of tax cuts would have won few working class votes in the 1950s this prospect had acquired great electoral appeal, even to voters with incomes well below the average, by the end of the 1970s.

Thatcher, as we now know, has imposed still further increases in wage taxation during the past three years, so that the average wage-earner now pays 28% of his/her income in direct tax deductions. But in 1979 she was able to exploit and to turn to her own advantage the resentment associated with the already heavy burden of income tax. Much working class support could be



Capital Transfer Tax, brought in by a Labour Chancellor to iron out the anomalies of Estate Duty, is still avoidable if skilled tax consultants are available

mobilised for policies which, while involving a comprehensive political approach, could also be symbolised by the prospect of tax cuts. The welfare state was successfully identified with high taxation and with a reduction, not an improvement, in living standards. The price, to many working people, seemed too high.

Unequal burden

To some extent, of course, the rise in the general tax burden was the result of the increase in state expenditure which characterised most of the postwar period up until the mid-70s. But again we have to look not only at the overall level of taxation but also at the way it was distributed. For the increase in wage taxation over the past three decades has been accompanied by a significant reduction in taxes on capital. Consider what has happened to corporate taxation. Company tax liabilities have fallen steadily since the mid-50s offsetting to some extent the long run decline in profitability. Tax relief on the value of goods and raw materials stocks introduced by the last Labour government, combined with generous investment allowances, allowed companies to cut their tax payments to a negligible level.

Even by 1978/79 an American tax specialist was able to report that 'In contrast to the

UK individual income tax, the UK corporate income tax is modest by international standards. . . write-offs and stock-relief provisions have virtually eliminated the corporate tax for industrial and commercial companies.' In that year half the top twenty industrial and commercial companies were found to have paid no mainstream corporation tax at all and between them these top twenty firms paid only £388 millions in mainstream corporation tax, representing only a tiny fraction of their gross profits, which exceeded £5000 millions.

Personal wealth

A similar pattern emerges when we examine what has happened to taxes on personal wealth. Death duty, intended as a kind of inheritance tax, has for many years been Britain's most important form of wealth taxation. Private property is still heavily concentrated in the hands of a wealthy few: the richest 1% of the population still own a quarter of Britain's total personal wealth, including threequarters of the privately owned land, company shares and government securities. Death duties were perhaps the most important mechanism for attempting to achieve a fairer distribution of this wealth, but their importance has declined sharply over the years. Three decades ago, death

duties were a major revenue raiser, contributing almost 10% of all Inland Revenue receipts. Ten years ago, they contributed less than 4½% of the total. Capital Transfer Tax (CTT) introduced to replace them in 1974, now represent little more than 1½% of the taxes collected by the Inland Revenue.

The disappearance of such inheritance taxes was largely the result of widespread avoidance and evasion. Death duties (properly described as Estate Duty) came to be known as a form of 'voluntary taxation'. Since the tax was payable only on the death of the owner, it was avoided by the simple expedient of 'passing on one's wealth before passing-on oneself'. In 1975 the Labour government, committed to 'a fundamental shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families', sought to close this loophole by introducing the Capital Transfer Tax, payable on all gifts and inheritances, whether passed on at death or during the donor's lifetime. But the new tax, once introduced, contained so many generous exemptions that CTT now raises less revenue than the old Estate Duty that it replaced.

The present Chancellor's dislike of capital taxes is well-known, and he has done his best to reduce the effect of CTT still further. After the last Budget the *Financial Times*

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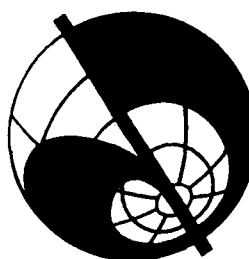
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reported that 'all but the very wealthiest can almost escape tax entirely. For 1982/83 even the absolute amount of tax is expected to fall' (10 March 1982). CTT is expected to raise only £465 millions this year, virtually the same amount *in cash terms* as the old Estate Duty raised almost ten years ago. The same may be said of the other two main forms of wealth taxation, the Capital Gains Tax (CGT), which is theoretically payable on the increasing value of stocks, shares and other assets, and the investment income tax. CGT, like Capital Transfer Tax, now raises, proportionately much less revenue than when it was introduced by the Wilson government in 1965 and, as the Government readily admits, the changes announced in the last Budget will have the effect of 'drastically reducing' the revenue yield further still. Investment income tax has also been cut by Sir Geoffrey which means that, given the increase in wage taxation imposed at the same time, investment incomes (such as rents, dividends and interest receipts) are now generally taxed less heavily than earned incomes. So too are capital gains.

Struggles over taxation

Thatcher has done much to shift the burden of taxation towards working people and the poor, using the tax system as one, very effective, means of increasing inequalities. But in this respect her policies represent little more than an acceleration of a trend stretching back three decades and more. However, there is more to it than this.

In this context, it is important to note that the formal incidence of taxation and its final burden rarely coincide. Governments may arrange formal tax liabilities in a way that is intended to increase the relative tax burden either of wage-earners, the company sector or the owners of personal wealth. But their ability to make these intentions effective is determined by the relative strength of each of these groups. Companies which have some degree of monopoly power, for instance, may be able to pass any increase in corporate taxation on to their customers (in the form of higher prices) or their workers (in the form of lower wages). So the increasing concentration of industry and the institutionalisation of personal wealth helps the corporate sector to resist attempts by Labour governments to increase their share of taxation.

Similarly, during the periods of relatively full employment in the 1960s and 1970s, a strong and militant trade union movement was able to resist attempts to increase the effective burden of taxation by winning wage claims sufficient to compensate for the increased tax liability. In the 1970s this process reached its height, developing into a

Tax Threshold and Marginal Tax Rates 1955-78, Two Child Family (3)

	Tax threshold as % of average earnings (1)	First rate payable (2)	Basic rate threshold as % average earnings	Basic rate
1955	99.5	9	179.3	33
1956	93.4	9	168.2	33
1957	88.4	9	159.2	33
1958	86.8	9	156.2	33
1959	82.2	7	148.0	30
1960	76.0	7	137.8	30
1961	73.8	7	131.8	30
1962	71.4	7	127.5	30
1963	34.5	15	128.7	30
1964	78.1	15	119.0	30
1965	71.9	15	109.8	32
1966	69.4	15	106.0	32
1967	66.0	15	100.7	32
1968	57.4	15	89.6	32
1969	56.1	23	82.0	32
1970	57.6	32	57.6	32
1971	58.6	30	58.6	30
1972	59.9	30	59.9	30
1973	52.4	30	52.4	30
1974	57.1	33	57.1	33
1975	44.5	35	44.5	35
1976	46.3	35	46.3	35
1977	51.0	34	51.0	34
1978	45.4	25	62.4	33
1979	44.7	25	58.3	30
1980	41.5	30	41.5	30
1981	41.9	30	41.9	30
1982	42.5	30	42.5	30

Notes

- (1) Average earnings are the annual equivalent of the earnings of manual workers in manufacturing in October each year.
- (2) In the case of the marginal rates of tax shown it is the effective rate payable after the calculation of earned income relief.
- (3) In later years the tax threshold is represented as 'tax free income' to allow for the transition from child tax allowances to child benefit.

fierce 'wage-tax spiral'. Governments appeared to be using taxation as an alternative form of wage restraint: in years when pay policies failed or were inoperative, taxation was allowed to rise. This policy was only made explicit when Healey attempted to break into the wage tax spiral by offering a reduction in income tax as a direct trade-off for voluntary wage-restraint. Although a generally strong trade union movement was able, for much of this time, to neutralise attempts to hold down living standards through taxation, the weaker and more vulnerable sections of the workforce were unable to do so. The share of wage taxation carried by the lowest paid increased as a result.

Thatcher's period of office in this context is distinctive in one important respect. She

has managed to use unemployment and attacks on the power of trade unions successfully to weaken working class resistance to the increased tax burden. Wage-earners are no longer in a position to offset the increase in taxation by demanding compensatory wage increases. The shift in taxation, this time, has been decisive and effective.

Taxation and the AES

The lesson must be that taxation cannot be viewed in isolation from a wider political and economic strategy. Thatcher has learned this lesson well, and so too must the Left. The alternative economic strategy (AES) represents the basis for a credible challenge to the present Government's right wing populism. But it also requires increased revenue to

Comparison for EEC countries of tax thresholds and rates of income tax and social security contributions (1981)

Married couple with two children	Threshold in £ sterling	Rate of income tax	Rate of income tax and social security contributions
Belgium	3,300	21.7	29.4
Denmark	2,445	14.6	18.8
France	5,400	7.2	16.8
West Germany	3,010	18	34.45
Ireland	2,680	25	29.5
Italy	2,070	18.4	24.5
Luxembourg	5,635	12.3	22.8
Netherland	3,040	16.3	32.3
UK	2,146	30	37.75

Source: *Hansard*, 1 February 1982, Col 19—22.

finance increases in the social wage, better public services, fair pay and conditions for public sector workers and an adequate level of benefits. Some of this revenue will generate itself as people get back to work and the economy revives, but some will also have to come through increased taxation. The support of working people, without which the AES is no more than a technical construct, will be all the harder to win if their tax burden is increased still further as a result. Such fears will quickly be manipulated by the Right in an attempt to mobilise

working class opposition to the strategy. So a clearly defined and radical policy on taxation, designed to achieve a *redistribution* of the tax burden, is essential.¹ Such a policy is necessary not only to finance the AES itself, but also to achieve many of the other objectives which are central to the strategy, including reductions in sexual and economic inequality.

¹This question, and some of the other issues raised in this article, are discussed more fully in L. Day and C Pond 'The Political Economy of Taxation', *Socialist Economic Review* 1982.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of tax reform, but we can identify some of the essential elements of a radical tax policy. The first is the development of a truly progressive income tax system. Within the overall increase in wage taxation, there has been a marked shift in the burden towards those on the lowest incomes: in the past fifteen years alone, the contribution of the richest 1% of income taxpayers to total revenue has almost halved. Contrary to popular belief, Britain's income tax structure is no longer 'progressive' in the traditional sense that the rich face higher rates of tax than the poor. Less than 5% of taxpayers are subject to the higher rates of tax; the remaining 95% pay at the same standard rate of 30p in the £. This includes many families whose income is well below the official (supplementary benefit) poverty line. And taking account of national insurance contributions (which are paid as a proportion of earnings only up to £220 a week), the marginal rate of tax is in fact *higher* for a married couple on £50 a week than for a couple earning almost six times as much.

Poverty trap

Once again, Thatcher's policies have made the situation worse, increasing tax rates on

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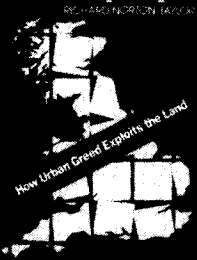
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the poor and imposing them at still lower levels of income, while cutting tax rates for the rich. One of the results is that increasing numbers of poor families are caught in the 'poverty trap': because they have incomes below officially defined levels of subsistence,

the average wage earner now pays 28% of his/her income in direct tax deductions

they are entitled to benefits such as Family Income Supplement and housing rebates; but many are also liable to income tax. So an increase in their gross pay will mean that their benefits — being subject to a means test — will fall, while their tax liability will rise. They may find themselves worse off than if they had never received a pay rise in the first place. The number of families with children caught in this poverty trap have almost doubled since Thatcher came to power.

Tinkering with the level of tax thresholds and rates will no longer be sufficient to disentangle this web of inequality created by the tax system. A radical tax policy must try to achieve a shift in the income tax burden towards the rich at least as dramatic as that engineered by the present Government in the opposite direction. The present basically flat rate income tax structure needs to be replaced by one which is much more progressive, and the poor must be taken out of tax altogether. National insurance contributions should be abolished with the revenue for social security being raised through general taxation, rather than through a separate and regressive wage tax. The structure of income tax rates, however, accounts for only part of the present lack of progressiveness in the system. Even if an incoming Labour government were to restore the highest rates of tax on the rich, few

would pay them. An elaborate system of tax reliefs, allowances and exemptions has developed, allowing an escape route from taxation for the highest income groups. Less than half of all incomes received are subject to tax at all. Socialists and tax specialists alike agree that the expensive anomalies of the married man's allowance and mortgage interest relief should be withdrawn, but these are only the visible tip of a much larger iceberg of tax exemptions. Change must come through a comprehensive widening of the tax base to ensure that all incomes (including fringe benefits and capital gains) are taxed under the same progressive schedule of rates. At present many such forms of income escape tax altogether.

Changes in the system of company and wealth taxes are also necessary. At present the taxable incomes of companies bear little relation to their true profits. Depreciation of capital equipment should of course, be allowed against taxable profits, as with other costs of production, but the 100% capital allowances now granted are unjustified. Investment incentives should be awarded under a system of investment grants (of the type operated between 1966 and 1970)

all but the very wealthiest can almost escape tax entirely

rather than tax allowances. The provision of such subsidies should be conditional on fulfillment by the recipient company of agreements on planning, internal democracy and employment conditions. Undistributed profits should be allocated to shareholders and included in their income tax liability (as if they were partners in the business) along with their dividend receipts. There would still be a case for a separate form of corporate taxation (in addition to that paid by shareholders and creditors of the company on their income receipts) to reflect the

benefits of incorporation, including economies of scale and the advantage of limited liability. This should be levied progressively with higher rates of tax applied to larger profits.

The last Labour Government tried to introduce an annual wealth tax of the type already operating in a dozen other non-socialist OECD countries, but the attempt was frustrated by Parliamentary ineptitude and civil service obstruction. Such a tax would apply an annual levy, at progressive rates, on the total value of each individual's personal wealth. To have a significant impact in reducing inequalities, the rates of tax would have to be sufficiently high to ensure that, combined with taxes on the income generated by the wealth, the largest estates could not be maintained intact. Valuation might be difficult but would be made easier by a system of self-assessment backed by the option for the state to buy any asset at the price at which it was valued by the owner. Even a wealth tax intended to prevent the accumulation of personal wealth would take several years to have a noticeable impact on the largest wealth holdings. Most of the very rich acquire their wealth through inheritance. An inheritance tax, combined with an annual wealth tax and applied at steeply progressive rates (rising to perhaps 100%) would have more effect. The tax should be payable by the recipient (instead of the donor as is now the case) and should, of course, apply to all life-time gifts. Current exemptions for trusts, agricultural land and national heritage should probably be withdrawn if the tax is to be workable.

Without a consistent and carefully worked out tax policy, the alternative economic strategy is incomplete and perhaps unworkable. But technical rearrangements of formal tax liabilities will not themselves be sufficient to ensure that the final tax burden is more fairly distributed. Previous Labour governments have introduced tax changes intended to increase the share contributed by property incomes (Corporation Tax, CTT and CGT are all examples) without a significant and lasting effect on the distribution of the final tax burden. The need is for such technical changes to be implemented against a background an economic and political strategy which really does aim to shift the balance of power towards working people. The Left must be aware of the political significance of taxation and of the need to prepare a credible alternative tax policy to counter Tory jibes that socialism equals heavy tax burdens even for the poor. Otherwise crude promises of tax cuts could yet again help to win the election for Thatcher. □

Thatcherism — who pays?

Proportion of income (1) taken in tax and national insurance contributions: married couple with two children.

	3/4 x average earnings	1 x average earnings	2 x average earnings	5 x average earnings
1978/79	20.8	25.2	29.9	49.8
1979/80	21.0	24.7	27.9	41.2
1980/81	22.5	25.8	29.0	42.7
1981/82	24.5	27.6	31.3	44.9
1982/83	24.9	28.1	31.5	44.4
1983/84 ²	25.1	28.4	31.7	44.5

Notes (1) Income equals earnings plus child benefit.

(2) Estimated

Source: House of Commons, *Hansard*, 23 November 1982, 13 December 1982.

**Major electoral reform is now a distinct possibility.
Yet the Left is very divided about what its own attitude should be.**

Dave Cook

Proportional representation: threat or opportunity?



*Demonstration of Plaid Cymru members in support
of an all-Welsh TV Channel.*

A debate among the Left about PR is long overdue. The Alliance make it a central plank of their programme. Several prominent left wing supporters of PR including Arthur Scargill, Robin Blackburn and Tariq Ali,

have entered the fray, adding their voices to those of the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform, set up in 1979, and the Communist Party. However, most left wing opinion within the Labour Party remains implacably opposed to PR, and recently the attack upon it has sharpened.

Obviously something is afoot and it is not difficult to detect what. Opponents of PR in the Labour Party fear that the Tories may agree to some measure of electoral reform in order to get Alliance support in the House of Commons, if they are not able to form an

overall majority after the general election. Supporters of PR within the labour movement argue that in the long run PR would increase the chances for socialism, and that instead of allowing the Alliance to appear as the champions of democratising the electoral system, the Left should vigorously take up the campaign.

Thus there has been a catalyst for both sides of this argument within the Left. And so this debate.

What form of PR?

Many alternatives to the British 'first past the post' system operate in different countries. The French second ballot method is often incorrectly regarded as a form of PR, but by retaining single member constituencies it prevents proportional results. Holland, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium have list systems of PR but they completely sever the link between constituency and MP. The Federal German, and the Additional Member method attempt a compromise, keeping the single member constituency and moving closer to proportional results. In the latter system this is done by 'topping' up a number of seats from the most successful of the losing candidates in the constituency elections, and in the German case from national lists in proportion to each party's total vote. However, both these methods still retain very powerful obstacles to minority parties, in the German case a 5% qualifying 'threshold' having to be surmounted.

As far as the Left's case for PR is concerned these variants all retain undemocratic features in varying degrees. PR by single transferable vote (STV) in 'multi-member' constituencies is what this argument is about. This method is advocated by the Communist Party, the Liberal Party and the Electoral Reform Society, and is used in the Republic of Ireland.

Under this system, each voter numbers the candidates in order of preference on his/her ballot paper. A quota is calculated; for example in a 5 member seat it is 1/6 of the votes cast. Any candidate getting more than the quota is elected immediately. Excess votes above the quota are redistributed according to second preferences. Similarly the votes of unsuccessful candidates are progressively redistributed until all the seats are filled by candidates who pass the quota.

Democracy

Although many of the issues bound up in the case for PR are key strategic ones, the main argument is a matter of democratic principle.

The 'first past the post' system is

The case for PR
I

undemocratic in two fundamental ways. Firstly, it is possible for one of the two major parties to get more parliamentary seats than the other and yet poll less votes. More often this has benefited the Tories, for example in 1951 Labour got more votes, but ended up with less seats. Occasionally, as in February 1974 the bias worked the other way. In other words the system is a lottery, capable of distorting representation in favour of the two main parties either way.

Secondly, if there is an element of chance in which of the two main parties the system damages most, there is absolutely none about the penalties it imposes on 'third' parties. Of course this is why the Labour Party switched from its early support for PR to opposition to it in 1926, when it was becoming one of the main beneficiaries of the present system.

These penalties become particularly unjust in the context of the long term decline in support for the two main parties. In October 1951 96.8% of the total turnout of 82.5% voted Labour or Conservative. By May 1979 only 80.8% of the votes cast were for the big two, out of a turnout of 76%. Yet, as we know the 19.2% of votes cast for other parties is grossly under-represented when it comes to parliamentary seats. The present system consistently means the election of

no government since the war has polled 50% or more of votes cast

minority governments. The present Government got its overall majority of 43 with the support of only 1/3 of the electorate and 43.9% of the voters. Indeed, no government since the war has polled 50% or more of votes cast, and often much less. The Left must stand, unambiguously not just for universal suffrage but for representative assemblies which reflect the votes cast. Any equivocation on this hands the democratic argument to the Right, and tarnishes the Left's commitment to democracy.

It is important to add that those who see the choice of electoral systems as primarily about Labour's electoral chances can end up presenting an opportunistic case. It is common, for example, for opponents of PR to argue that the key issue of democracy involved is that of the 'accountability' of a government to the electorate, rather than whether the House of Commons and the government represents the votes cast. This will not do. Proportionality and accountability are opposite sides of the coin only to those who fear that the coin may not spin their way.

The problem for Labour and the Left

Left wing defenders of the present electoral system have to face the fact that some of the problems they allege PR will bring for the Labour Party are with us already in one form or another. Labour's share of the vote has gone down in every general election since 1951 with the single exception of 1966. In 1979 it was below 40% for the third time running, including only a minority of working class voters. It is not PR, but the present system, that has seen the breakdown of two party domination and the spectre of a

by and large, the advocacy of mass politics, has come from outside the traditional soils of Labourism

right wing led centrist coalition placed on the agenda.

It is beyond the scope of this article to go into why this has happened. What I want to argue here, though is that PR can give a boost to the sort of politics, both in the working class movement as a whole, and in the Labour Party, that are needed to break out of the current crisis.

A great deal depends on how the problem is defined. *For the Left* the question we face is not simply how to scrape a Labour majority at the next election on a minority of votes. It is also how in the longer run we can build a genuine political majority for change in a leftwards direction. If the problem is seen only in party political terms, and in the context of the 'first past the post' electoral system, this issue is never faced up to. This is very serious, for without the active support of an overall majority, no major changes in the distribution of wealth and power will be possible.

At present, that potential majority is made up of Labour voters plus some of those who support the Alliance parties, the nationalist parties, the Communist Party, some Tory voters and abstainers who have opted out of party politics. Certainly Labour needs to extend its support and regain lost ground. But if the Left is to build such a political majority it will also need to come to terms with, rather than dismiss, that crucial anti-Tory segment of the electorate who do not (and will not for the foreseeable future) vote Labour. The key strategic problem now facing socialists is how to build a political majority that includes part of the centre but is under the leadership of the Left. In a sense that will be true whatever the electoral system; but PR will force the Left, and in particular Labour, to

face up to this question sooner and more fully than will 'first past the post'.

There is another, it must be said, strategically more distant, aspect of this question: the election—and sustenance—of a government committed to a radical left wing programme.

The Thatcher government has received the support of all manner of 'extra parliamentary' forces in carrying through its attack; within the media and big business, sometimes in state agencies (one has only to think of the increasingly political role of police chiefs) and from within NATO. A left government could count in the main on nothing but hostility from such directions. The present electoral system is not intended to give mandates to policies that challenge the status quo; only for those that administer it. A Left government based on a passive minority of voters could never sustain itself against such opposition. At a minimum, as in France today, it would need the support of a majority of voters. PR will necessitate and ensure an electoral base.

The expression 'Left' rather than 'Labour' has been used deliberately to describe the government that is likely to be in the driving seat in the advanced stages about which I am enjoying the luxury of speculating in these rather bleak times. Because of the realities of our working class movement, such a government will no doubt be predominantly Labour but it is by no means certain that it would be exclusively so. In terms of parliamentary politics, based on PR, this could mean cooperation, on some issues and in some circumstances with political forces to its right and even to its left, since left breakaways from Labour and the strengthening of non-Labour socialist forces may also take place. Such a broader based government was a feature of Popular Unity in Chile in the 70s and similarly of the Mitterrand government in France today.

Thus now, and in the future, a more flexible PR system will face Labour up to the need both to build more deep rooted support than the class loyalty which is now proving such an inadequate foundation, and to consider alliances with other political forces. The present system, though it may provide a fortuitous ability to form a government out of a minority of votes cast, also means that these governments can be powerless and vulnerable because the wider battle for political support has not even been waged, let alone won.

It is unrealistic to envisage that the sort of majority that is needed, both now and in the future, will be built entirely through the vehicle of the Labour Party. Some of the Left of course are contemptuous of any idea

of involving parts of the 'centre'. Others remain locked in internalised struggles within the hermetically sealed canisters of Labour Party organisations, and display a touching faith that provided conference policies are clearly presented to the people, there will be a great mass swing to Labour. Given the remorseless long term character of the party's electoral decline, the likely intensification of internal conflict, and the consolidation of 'centrist' political forces, this seems a pipe dream.

The most realistic trend within the Labour Left, that associated with Benn, Hain, Galloway, and the Labour Coordinating Committee has been emphasising the need for a new activist dimension and, to a lesser extent, the importance of alliances and movements outside the party. However, within the Labour Party left these are minority voices.

By and large, indeed, the advocacy of mass politics, of industrial and 'extra parliamentary' action, of the politicising of the trade union affiliations and the development of broad and democratic movements has come from outside the traditional soils of Labourism, the People's March for Jobs and the revitalisation of CND being cases in point. There is no reason for believing that this will not continue to be the case.

A new impetus for mass politics

The construction of the new sort of political majority that is needed is only going to be possible if there is a greatly increased level of popular mobilisation through the trade unions and a whole range of democratic movements in all areas of life. It will require many initiatives to get the active involvement of working people rather than 'leave it up to the councillor' types of paternalism. It will also be impossible without the strengthening of broad movements of struggle that are independent of particular parties and not seen as their recruiting grounds.

PR would give a new energy to a whole range of minority political parties and democratic movements by increasing their chances of council and even parliamentary representation, forcing their concerns to the fore in a new way. We are talking about pluralism at the base, the inter-action between forms of popular mobilisation and existing representative bodies.

An example of this is the opportunity that PR would provide for black voters. To get groups of black councillors and MPs elected, or at least high votes if they do not get elected, is urgent and a necessity which many people feel overrides 'party' political considerations. Because the principle of proportionality could be made to work for



Gwynfor Evans, Plaid Cymru MP

black voters, in the same way as it can on behalf of party voters, this could have two powerful results. Firstly the main parties would have to speed up the adoption of black candidates. Secondly in constituencies where a black community was well organised, there would be strong pressure on parties like the Labour Party, (and the Communist Party), to reach an electoral agreement with the black organisations. Fortunately this process is already underway in some wards without PR. The same processes could also work to the advantage of women, tenants and other groupings.

So PR would give the political parties a strong electoral incentive to broaden their concerns. It is worth bearing in mind that despite its 5% threshold, the German

PR would give a new energy to a whole range of minority political parties and democratic movements

system has not stopped the Greens achieving representation in state assemblies, and this has forced the SPD to respond to pressures no longer just to its right—the Free Democrats—but now also from the left—the Greens.

One of the results of the present system bears particularly heavily on the Communist Party, although it penalises other left wing minority parties as well, because it is reasonable to assume that it is the politically conscious Labour voters who are most

determined not to 'let the Tories in'. So by removing this straightjacket whereby some socialists feel impelled to vote in this way, rather than for policies they may favour more, PR could enable some localised improvement in Communist votes. This would help strengthen the pressure for the sort of politics we are talking about, but also could mean that in certain areas the question of some form of electoral agreement by Labour with the Communist Party—and indeed other parties—would at least get an airing, and become an objective for political pressure. At present it is never discussed, because most 'minority' votes are so low and electoral agreements are prohibited by Labour rule.

This seems a much more likely avenue for the objective of a closer political relationship between Communist and Labour than that usually recommended by those of the Labour Left who would value such unity, and by a minority in the Communist Party—namely that the Communists should not stand candidates in order to clear the way for affiliation approaches.

PR would of course also greatly strengthen the position of the Alliance and nationalist parties within the councils and the Commons. However, by under representing the real support that exists for policies other than those of the two main parties, the 'first past the post' method does Labour no favours. Far better to face the party up to the changes that are needed than to maintain the protective cocoon with which it disguises the extent of its crisis.

Political pluralism

By and large the Labour Left do not have a vision of a plurality of political forces contributing to political change. Instead they see an increasing absorption of movements and individuals into the Labour Party. It will not be a surprise to readers of this article that its author does not share this approach, especially if it goes with a tendency to reduce vigorous democratic movements into electoral adjuncts of the Labour Party.

However, there are longer term issues at stake in the argument about plurality—and PR—which relate to the sort of socialism we are trying to achieve. We need to emphasise the role that a transformed Labour Party can play, and the importance of working class leadership, but must also stress another equation—a plurality of forces in the achievement of revolutionary change, and political pluralism after it. The 'first past the post' system, by blocking off other forms of working class and democratic political representation, has effectively put Labour into 'one party' power in some areas. For

'safe' Labour seat it has sometimes become possible to read 'corrupt' Labour seat. There have also been the undemocratic consequences of single party rule in the socialist countries.

The pressure for a 'single anti-Tory' candidate is a straitjacketed, undemocratic consequence of the present electoral system. It has nothing to do with a vision of a socialist democracy in which different political viewpoints openly contend. PR is more likely to produce the sort of politicised electorate that is the best guarantee that under socialism democracy will grow.

The Left's case against PR

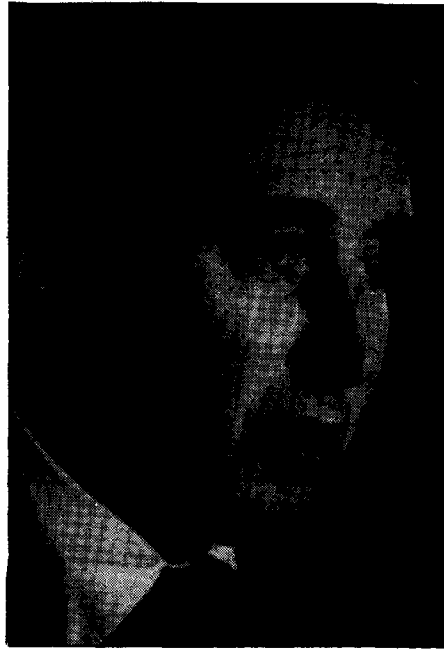
Arguments against PR from within the Left fall into three categories; firstly guilt by association, the fact that sections of right wing opinion are also in favour of it; secondly, that PR would make the election of a majority Labour government more difficult, and thirdly that PR is a force for centrism, favouring coalition government, reducing the link between constituency and MP, strengthening the power of party bureaucracies, and stressing proportionality rather than accountability.

There is no doubt that some Tories, although neither the party nor its leadership as a whole, are in favour of PR. However, supporters and opponents of PR are to be found across the entire political spectrum so that does not really settle anything. It would be strange indeed if some sections of reactionary opinion were not looking at political alternatives to political institutions

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which have served them well up until the present crisis. In similar ways some Tories, for example Lord Hailsham, have recommended a written constitution and a constitutional court as a possible check on a left-dominated House of Commons. We have to determine our attitude, not for twists and turns by the Right, but according to principle and the interests of the working class and its socialist aims.

When it comes to speculating about the likely effects of PR, we have to beware of projecting voting behaviour based on the present system into what would be a completely different situation; similarly with analogies based on Irish experience. Their politics differ in so many respects that it would be foolish to attribute their recent



David Steel, leader of the Liberal Party

hung parliaments to the STV method. The reality is that if PR were to be introduced in Britain no one knows exactly how the arithmetic would work out. Nonetheless, in the short run it would certainly make the return of a majority (ie, parliamentary majority) Labour government more difficult. But, as we have already argued, it would serve to greatly strengthen the longer term possibilities for Labour and the Left.

Opponents of PR argue that under it, voters would exert less influence on the sort of government that is elected than they do now. By enabling greater representation for 'third' and minority parties, PR may make it more difficult for any single party to get an overall majority of seats, and this would make coalitions more likely. These will be fixed by political dealing at the centre, over which the voters have no control and express no view when they make their choice at the ballot box. Tony Benn, in particular, has argued that it is more democratic to present a clear policy platform to the electorate, which they know will then provide the substance of the government's programme, than for the latter to be the product of negotiation between parties after the election.

The argument that PR may produce a more representative Parliament but a government which is less accountable for the electorate, appears powerful at first sight. It is less so if the following points are considered. Firstly the Labour Party has a long 'unaccountable' tradition, of ignoring manifesto promises, and whether this continues or not has nothing to do with the electoral system. It will be decided by the

course of political struggle and the degree of 'extra parliamentary' pressure. Secondly voters are not stupid. Alongside any trend towards coalition governments would also go pressure for programmatic and electoral agreements *before* the election with parties making clear in the manifesto their minimum conditions for entering any coalition. Nor must we fall for the argument that all the pressures in any coalition will be to 'trim to the centre'. The fact is that some of Labour's partners in a future coalition may be more advanced and more determined on some issues than they are.

The most obvious defect of the STV method of PR is that it requires very large constituencies. It would therefore be much more difficult for constituents to influence their MP. Also as far as the Labour Party is

there is a contradiction between their overall democratising perspective and their support for an undemocratic electoral system

concerned, many of the Left's advances have been strongest at this level, and mandatory reselection has been a pivot of left wing strategy. All this would be threatened with 5 member constituencies of 315,000 electors. These are powerful arguments and they cannot be dismissed, especially as on other fronts the Left is arguing for decentralisation of decision-making, and reducing the power of central bureaucracies.

Of course it is possible to argue that existing constituencies sometimes have no real unity anyway, and that constituents often turn to other MPs if their own is unsympathetic. Also PR would open up avenues to accountability for minorities at present excluded, and in multi-member constituencies MPs would have to divide the area up between them for 'surgery' work. This having been said, I feel that this is the strongest argument against PR, and it can only be overcome in the context of the total balance sheet.

What is hopeful about the present argument is that sections of the Labour Left are beginning to recognise that this balance sheet is positive, and that there is a growing contradiction between their overall democratising perspective and their support for an undemocratic electoral system. It is time for a new pressure for the STV form of PR, not least because its absence leaves a vacuum into which some of PR's right wing advocates could place one of the less democratic alternatives. □

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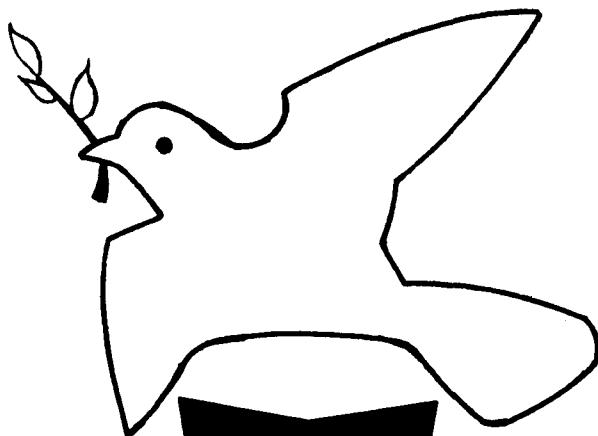
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Peter Hain

Proportional representation: threat or opportunity?

Communist Party, the Socialist Society or in some Trotskyist groups — makes it even more imperative that we get to grips with it, especially since PR is likely to become an increasingly important issue as the traditional party system fragments and realigns.

PR in practice

The rhetoric of the PR movement contains a high dose of moral self-righteousness. But when it comes to the practical implementation of PR, many of its alleged virtues are severely tarnished.

The two options most widely advocated are the 'list' and 'single transferable vote' systems. Under the list systems (which operate for example in Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden), parties present their own lists of candidates in order of preference. Voters then vote for a party and MPs are selected from the party lists in numbers depending upon the proportion of votes cast.

The crucial drawback to list systems is that they completely break the link between MPs and their constituents. They also place enormous power in the hands of national or regional party bureaucracies to determine the selection and order of preference of candidates, virtually shutting out all local party influence. Just as constituency Labour Parties have won unprecedented power, it would be sucked away from them under a list system.

The German list system attempts to overcome this problem by retaining single-member constituencies, along the lines of the British parliamentary system, and then arriving at true proportionality by 'topping up' the total number of MPs from regional lists.

But the German option still suffers from the problem of control by the party bureaucracy. It would mean either doubling the size of present parliamentary constituencies or doubling the number of MPs, raising either democratic or practical objections. It would also mean in effect two classes of MPs: those elected as now and those appointed by the party machine — a shortcoming strongly criticised in 1976 by



photo: Mike Abrahams/Network

It looks good. It sounds good. Proportional representation is altogether a 'Good Thing': the political publicists' dream of a marketable commodity. After all, it's about 'fairness' — isn't it? 'Fairness' to small parties, such as the Liberals, SDP and even CP. It's also 'more democratic' — isn't it? Surely that's self-evident? Any system that equates votes cast more closely to seats won *must* be more democratic — surely?

So why should some socialists come along and spoil things by opposing PR?

This article draws extensively on *Proportional Misrepresentation?*, a new pamphlet by Peter Hain and Geoff Hodgson. It is available from Institute of Workers Control, 45 Gamble Street, Nottingham NG7 4ET, price £1 including p & p.

There are several key reasons why the Left should view the current fashion for PR with the greatest scepticism. First, however attractive it might sound in theory — who could possibly object to a system that seems fairer? — in practice it can only be implemented at great cost to important democratic principles of accountability and community. Second, it is a positive diversion from the real priorities for democratic reform: tackling Britain's crisis will not be achieved by tinkering with electoral procedures. Third, the dominant momentum for PR is a reactionary one, designed to thwart the progress of a left labour movement.

The fact that some on the Left have begun to advocate PR — whether in the

The case against PR
2

the pro-PR Report of the Hansard Society under the chairmanship of Lord Blake.

The STV system

That Report was even more critical of the option now most widely supported, including by the Alliance, namely the single transferable vote (STV) system in multi-member constituencies. And it is easy to see why, for STV abandons the single member constituency, requiring seats with on average four or five members and containing over 300,000 electors each. Such monster constituencies would totally undermine the link between an MP and his/her electors, and make it impossible to reflect the views of distinct communities. The same problem would arise for local councillors. With political representatives already far too remote and unaccountable to local people, it would be nothing short of scandalous to widen that gap still further.

In an effort to overcome some of the worst anomalies of STV, the Liberals and the SDP last year came up with a variation called 'community PR' that reduces the size of constituencies in rural areas, (which could otherwise cover thousands of square miles) and increases them in urban areas (Leeds, for example, would be a single constituency with eight members).

But that does not overcome the central objection to large, amorphous constituencies. Conveniently, it also penalises the Labour Party which would be less likely to gain a seat in the smaller rural constituencies than would the Tories or the Alliance in larger urban constituencies.

A panacea?

However you fiddle the figures, play around with boundaries or vary PR systems, you still end up with shortcomings which are at least as serious, and in many respects more so, than those of the existing system. Scratch beneath the surface of PR euphoria and you find endless complexities and obstacles, all of which add up to one simple but crucial point: PR is *not* a more democratic system, just a different one. It has some advantages, but overwhelming disadvantages for the quality of democracy.

Proportionality between votes and seats is not the key issue: far more important is the need to strengthen mechanisms of accountability and opportunities for popular participation.

This needs emphasising, because PR is often advocated as a panacea, with its supporters waxing lyrical about its powers. The Centre Right see it as a means of overcoming, at a stroke, party wrangles, 'extremism', class conflict and economic

crisis: many in the SDP and Liberals argue for PR quite literally in those terms.

Even if a more sober view is taken, it is still illusory to imagine that precise electoral arrangements matter much in achieving economic success or political stability. Alliance members need to be reminded that for every PR 'success' there is a PR 'failure': postwar Germany and Italy are, respectively, testimony to that.

Nor will PR on its own alter the balance of power in Britain. The balance of *party* power may be changed and a game of musical chairs involving conventional party politicians would doubtless result. But real political and economic power will still be concentrated in the hands of a minority.

Left wing arguments

Meanwhile, left wing advocates of PR appear to base their case on two equally dubious propositions. First, it is suggested that PR would bring about a political realignment resulting in a break-up of the Labour Party and the emergence of an authentic left wing party which would significantly advance the socialist cause. Now whilst the left-right coalition in Labour could well split under PR, would that really advance the socialist cause in Britain? On the contrary, it would marginalise the Left still farther, with little prospect of the labour movement being able to mobilise a parliamentary majority, leaving any 'pure' socialist party in a tiny minority and dependent upon joining a coalition with the Centre to secure office.

Second, it is argued by PR devotees on the Left that socialism requires majority support to be implemented and that one of the problems Labour has faced is that it has not had such majority electoral backing, at least for the past 30 years. In principle, the point is well taken. But it is a naive view of political change which pretends that once the magic figure of 50% is passed, something called 'socialism' suddenly becomes possible when it was not before. Socialist transformation is surely a more complex process and there is a very strong case for a radical Labour government (albeit without the requisite electoral majority) seeking to use its office to help *build* the kind of socialist consciousness that could lead to a real majority for socialism.

A new topicality

Even if one were to concede that there is room for debate on these matters on the Left, the crushing weight of the momentum for PR comes not from the Left but from the Centre-Right. And it is this central, stark reality which we ignore at our peril.

Given that PR is not more democratic,

given that at best the left wing case for it is questionable, we must pay attention to the reason why it has arisen as a force at this particular historical juncture.

First, there has been legitimate concern about the decline in positive support for the two major parties and the sense that we may be moving toward multi-party politics for which PR is tailor-made. Second, PR has been backed out of opportunism, notably by SDP leaders who, only a year before their new party was launched with PR amongst its main priorities, were opposing the whole idea and had done so consistently before then.

But perhaps more important than these reasons, PR has been backed out of deep anxiety from the Centre-Right that it was essential to build an alternative to traditional Toryism that was sufficiently credible to avoid the danger of a socialist government taking office. This is the *real politik* of PR, around which slogans about 'fairness' and 'more democracy' form a smokescreen.

It is significant that in the two most recent periods when Conservatism appeared to be seriously threatened — in 1972-3 under Heath and 1980-81 under Thatcher — and when a potentially left Labour government stood waiting in the wings, media support for PR jumped. Various establishment figures came out for it. Also, these periods were characterised by third party revivals.

The most interesting support at such times has come from Conservative Action for Electoral Reform, representing Tories in the Disraeli/Macmillan tradition of pragmatic or 'wet' Conservatism. Their support for PR dates almost exactly from the leftward swing in the Labour Party since the early 1970s. One of their leaflets argues: 'The present electoral system could easily give power to a Socialist Party . . . (under PR) . . . we have the power to extinguish extreme left-wing government indefinitely . . .'. (As is made clear, for 'Socialist' and 'extreme left-wing', read 'Labour'.)

Coalition

In November 1979, as the ruling class became worried about the consequences of Thatcherism, *The Times* argued in an editorial that introducing PR would make Britain 'safe from the most damaging political event that could at present happen to us' — ie the election of a Labour government.

That advantage is coupled with the view of top businessmen (from such companies as Reed International, Rank Hovis McDougall and Beechams) who see PR as a means of creating a 'stable' government. Their leaflet, 'Why Industry Needs Electoral Reform

Now, stresses the dependence of the market economy on political continuity and argues that PR would provide this by avoiding 'political dogma'.

Thus PR is seen by the Centre Right as throwing a lifebelt to British capitalism, with the *Guardian's* political columnist and SDP publicist, Peter Jenkins, adding in 1981 that PR 'would make it easier to tackle the trade union problem with authority and continuity'.

Another bonus of PR from that point of view is the inevitability of permanent coalitionism, the strengthening of the Centre-Right and the political re-alignment all this would bring. Indeed PR devotees relish the prospect of coalition government, not least because they believe — with considerable justification — that it would finish the job begun by the SDP defectors of splitting the Labour Party.

Aside from specifically socialist objections to this consequence of coalitionism, it has many other shortcomings which all professed democrats ought to find alarming.

Voters will have much less opportunity of choosing a *government* as opposed to registering support for a *party* since, in general, coalition governments will depend upon deals done *after* elections. Similarly, the whole notion of the manifesto will be

even further undermined than at present. At least electors now have the opportunity of scrutinising the objectives of parties as stated in their election manifestoes and voting accordingly; under PR the manifesto would become rather like a set of trading tokens

their support for PR dates almost exactly from the leftward swing in the Labour Party since the early 1970s

able to be 'cashed' in exchange for political office, and less like a set of policies which the government might have some intention of implementing. Just as the manifesto was coming within sight of the rank and file of the labour movement, it would cease to have any real relevance.

Anti-democratic

For, running through the debate about PR, are competing notions of democracy and potentially conflicting democratic principles. These past few years the Left in Britain has rightly put great stress on *accountability*, and has notched up some impressive victories, at least within the structures of the labour movement. Yet PR undermines democratic

accountability at almost every point. It substantially and perhaps fatally breaks the link of accountability between the MP (or councillor) and the local community; it shifts power away from the local party to the regional or central party bureaucracy; it downgrades the role of the manifesto; it reduces the ability of voters to determine the composition of the government; and its tendency toward coalitionism makes it difficult for the electorate to 'pin down who is responsible' for decisions, (in the words of the political theorist, Sartori, who favours such elitism and advocates PR as a means of securing it).

It is therefore all the more disturbing that sections of the British Left and some feminists have taken up the PR banner. All too often they advocate it in generalised, woolly terms, failing to acknowledge what it means in practice.

While we can be sure that PR is here to stay as a major issue in British politics, it would be a tragedy if socialists began to press it on any serious basis when there are so many other critical reforms needed in the system of government — amongst them: decentralisation; devolution; abolition of the Lords; and reductions in the term of office of governments as advocated by the Levellers and the Chartists. □

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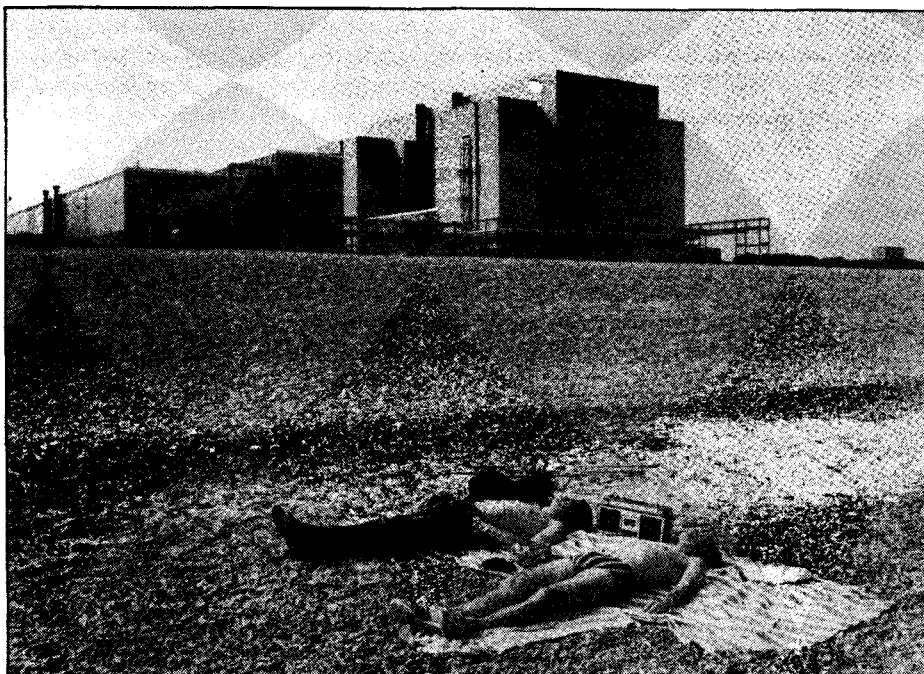
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Harold Immanuel Sizewell Syndrome



Sizewell Nuclear Power Station, Suffolk

Together with the privatisation of Britain's North Sea oil interests, one of the most important mainstays of the present Government's energy policy is its enthusiasm to build American Pressurised Water Nuclear Reactors (PWRs). This is despite the fact that a PWR has not been ordered in the USA for over four years. The American nuclear industry desperately needs an order from Britain to help rejuvenate itself and re-open export markets.

Just seven months after taking office in May 1979, the new Tory Government announced an expanded nuclear power programme of ten extremely large nuclear power stations. At least one nuclear station was to be ordered each year in the decade from 1982, equivalent to 'a programme of the order of 15,000 megawatts over ten years'. The first station was to be a PWR 'subject to the necessary consents and safety clearances'.¹ Since then, it has been a more or less open secret that subsequent nuclear stations would also be PWRs.

Yet it is already 1983 and the process of consent, let alone construction, is only now getting under way. The public inquiry into Sizewell 'B' — the first PWR, proposed for

Sizewell on the Suffolk coast — only began in January and is expected to last until the autumn. If everything now goes according to plan, construction of the first PWR will not be able to start before mid-1984.

Delays have been one of the great hallmarks of the British nuclear industry. This particular delay, associated with the reactor's design and cost, has not dampened the Government's enthusiasm. Nor has it reduced the enthusiasm of the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) — the nationalised industry which controls the supply of electricity in England and Wales and which has ordered Sizewell 'B'. The nuclear lobby seems to take the view that, in the long run, time is on their side and that they will still be going strong when the opposition has grown up, become accountants and moved back to Surbiton.

Whatever their view of the opposition to the PWR, further delay in the Sizewell 'B' project could prove to be its undoing. For the Tory Party is alone in supporting the PWR. The Labour Party, since 1982, is totally opposed to the development of the PWR. The Liberals have been opposed to nuclear power for some years although its

ally, the SDP, is yet to develop policy. The future of the PWR in Britain, rather like British Telecom, probably depends on the result of the next election. If the Tories fail to secure an overall majority, then Sizewell 'B' is unlikely to get beyond the drawing-board.

'Need'

Until recently, there was a broad consensus between the Tory and Labour Parties on the need for nuclear power. This was based on the fear of an impending shortfall in the supply of energy. Under both Tory and Labour administrations, the Department of Energy has produced forecasts which predicted an energy 'crisis' in the form of a widening energy 'gap' between the demand for, and the supply of, energy. The 'gap' was to be filled by nuclear power.

These forecasts have been heavily criticised for extrapolating past patterns of demand into the future; and for treating 'energy' as a single homogeneous whole. Alternative projections have been made which fit different forms of energy to end-uses where they can be used most efficiently — and therefore avoiding the appealing but erroneous assumption about a constant relationship between energy demand and economic growth. Using energy more efficiently also means an important role for energy conservation. But such an approach means a commitment by the Government to invest in conservation technology. The Tories, however, regard the price mechanism as the most effective means of encouraging conservation. If prices rise, consumers will be forced to invest in conservation. Never mind that consumers may not be able to afford the investment; the 'market' will ration energy efficiently.

The most significant aspect of the official forecasts, however, has been that they have consistently had to be revised downwards in the light of actual reality. The most recent projections, published as part of the Department of Energy's evidence to the inquiry, are mainly significant for the fact that, out of eight possible scenarios (allowing for different rates of economic growth, fuel prices and so forth), only one exceeds the 'lower case' of its predecessor, which is just three years old. In the Department of Energy's new projections, even the most optimistic assumptions about economic growth are not expected to repeat the high patterns of growth in energy demand of the 1960s. The estimate used, very informally, by the Department as a central estimate, suggests annual growth in primary energy demand of less than 1% and even negative growth is considered (Table 1). The equivalent growth in electricity demand is 1½%.

Table 1*Average Annual Rates of Growth in Energy Demand — actual and projected*

	Primary Energy*	Electricity	GDP
1960-70	2.42%	6.6%	2.89%
1970-80	—0.52%	1.5%	1.6%
1980-2010	—0.17% to 1.57%†	0.1% to 2.6%	0.5% to 2.5%

Source: Department of Energy

*Primary energy demand is the amount of primary fuels (coal, nuclear, oil, gas) actually used in production.

†Central estimate is 0.86%

Table 2*Primary Energy Demand — actual and projected*

	Coal	Nuclear	Total	millions tonnes of coal equivalent Coal as percentage of total	Nuclear as percentage of total
1960	198.6	2.6	286	69%	0.9%
1970	156.9	11.9	363	43%	3.3%
1980	120.8	15.4	345	35%	4.5%
1990	118.0	35.1	376	31%	9.3%
2000	118.0	60.1	406	29%	14.8%
2010	129.0	117.2	446	29%	26%

Source: Department of Energy

Table 3*Proportion of electricity generated by coal and nuclear power — actual and projected*

	Coal	Nuclear	million tonnes of coal equivalent Coal as percentage of total fuel used	Nuclear as percentage of total fuel used
1960	53.5	2.6	82%	4%
1970	77.3	11.8	70%	11%
1980	89.7	15.3	77%	13%
1990	85.0	35.1	67%	27%
2000	82.8	60.1	55%	40%
2010	49.5	117.2	29%	69%

Source: Department of Energy

Table 4*Projected Commissioning of New Base-Load
Generating Plant Not Yet Ordered*

	Coal	Nuclear
1991-2000	0.6	15
2001-2010	11.3	31

Source: Department of Energy

More important are the projections for how increases in electricity demand are to be met. Following the 'central' estimate of Table 1 — which assumes high UK industrial growth and low fuel prices and is quite favourable to coal — total demand for coal is seen to be static (Table 2), while the proportion of electricity to be generated by coal progressively falls (Table 3). Nuclear power, on the other hand, experiences an equally dramatic rise, gradually reducing coal's contribution to electricity from 80% to under 30%. This would be achieved by keeping to the Government's programme of building starts this decade on 15 GW² of new nuclear capacity. That is the programme shown in Table 4 — 15 GW of new nuclear plant ordered this decade for commissioning in the 1990s. In comparison, new coal plant envisaged is just 0.6 GW.

That these nuclear power stations would be PWRs is made clear by the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB). It has stated quite clearly to the Sizewell Inquiry that, 'subject to the normal processes of assessing and justifying each new generating station project in turn, it is likely that new nuclear power reactors will be of the PWR type'.³ In other words, if the CEGB can secure approval for a PWR at Sizewell, then almost all future power stations to the end of the century will be PWRs.

Emphasis, meanwhile, has shifted from an energy 'crisis' of shortage of supply to a different type of 'crisis'. In its evidence at the Sizewell Inquiry, the Department explains that: 'As with other fuels, the Government's objectives for electricity are that there should be *secure* supplies, provided to the consumer at the lowest possible cost . . . The *energy crises* of the last 10 years have shown the danger of *over-dependence on one fuel*, and the wisdom of a sensible degree of *diversity of supply*'.⁴ (My emphasis).

Since coal-fired power stations are currently responsible for some 80% of electricity supply, the 'solution' to this 'crisis' of 'over-dependence on one fuel' is to be the rapid development of the PWR — for which both the technology and fuel (uranium) are to be imported. The explicit purpose of the PWR programme is to reduce the importance of coal in the supply of electricity. It is coal, in the view of the Government, which is at the root of the threat to security of

GW

¹ 'Statement on the Nuclear Programme and the Nuclear Industry', Secretary of State for Energy, December, 1979.

² 1 GW = 1,000 megawatts.

³ CEGB Statement of Case, Sizewell 'B' Power Station Public Inquiry, Volume 1, page 62.

⁴ Proof of Evidence for the Sizewell 'B' Public Inquiry, Department of Energy, October, 1982.

electricity supply. This is the internal threat posed by trade unions. The *Daily Telegraph* explains: 'Nuclear power is potentially cheap and a capital-intensive form of energy . . . It is thus less vulnerable to being cut-off by politically motivated trade unionists or (as in the case of oil) foreign powers. For these reasons, we must hope it becomes the energy of the future.'⁵ The present Tory Cabinet agrees that: 'a nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity production from the dangers of disruption by coal miners or transport workers.'⁶ If that is the aim of government policy, then clearly it does not matter that, according to the Department of Energy, Britain has at least 300 years supply of extractable coal, using current technology.

Costs

The CEBG acknowledge that, for capacity reasons alone, immediate construction of Sizewell 'B' is unnecessary. But, based to a large extent on future prices of nuclear fuel relative to coal, they argue that it is economic to construct Sizewell 'B' to replace existing coal plant.

The capital cost of building coal stations is generally accepted to be cheaper than for nuclear stations. The argument in favour of

future power stations to the end of the century will be PWRs

nuclear stations is based on the supposed cheapness of their fuel and operating costs. However, it has become increasingly difficult to support this line of argument. Colin Sweet, in the *Costs of Nuclear Power*, has pointed out that for the Magnox stations (the first generation of British reactors), the CEBG's own accounts indicate that fuel costs, as a proportion of total generating costs, rose from 35% in 1971/2 to 91% in 1979/80. 'As conventional cost structure gives fuel and operating costs amounting to about 30% of total costs, this rise in fuel costs . . . places nuclear costing on its head.'⁷

In fact, nuclear capital costs are also rising. In research based on US data, Charles Komanoff has shown that, between 1971 and 1978, nuclear capital costs increased twice as fast as coal capital costs, after allowing for the effects of inflation; and that capital costs of nuclear plants will probably increase in the 1980s by an amount equal to the increase in the 1970s.⁸

The CEBG estimate that Sizewell 'B' will cost £1,147 million to construct. Sweet estimates that the actual cost is likely to be at least double the CEBG's figure. Small

increases in construction times can have a disproportional effect on cost; and it is with the failure to keep to construction schedules that the British nuclear industry has had such difficulties in the past. Meanwhile, the CEBG estimates Sizewell 'B' will take 7½ years to build, compared with US experience of an average 8½ years with broadly similar PWRs.

Although more of a PWR (compared to an AGR) can be pre-fabricated off-site, this is most likely to assist in keeping costs down if there is to be an ordering programme of PWRs; if no significant design changes are made for subsequent PWRs which follow Sizewell 'B'; and if the 'option' of retaining the AGR for future nuclear stations is not taken up.

Such an ordering programme would effectively write-off much of the infrastructure investment even in AGR nuclear stations. The CEBG takes no account of the wider economic and social effects of prematurely closing-down coal-fired stations. Since 1978, at a cost of over 5,000 jobs, 42 coal stations have been fully or partially shut-down, some before the end of their economic life. Perhaps most important are the broad economic effects of a PWR programme. If construction on five PWRs began before 1990, the cost of that alone would exceed the cost of Trident. If a 15,000 megawatt programme was actually pursued, it would require at least 10 PWRs being ordered by the end of the decade. Such a programme would, 'without question . . . be the greatest spending programme in the history of British technology — not excluding military programmes.'⁹ Strictly speaking, it may therefore be erroneous to talk of cuts in government expenditure as opposed to a reallocation of expenditure — towards the PWR and Trident and away from areas of social need.

In fact, the two nuclear programmes — PWR and Trident — may not be unrelated. Plutonium, one of the key raw materials for the production of Trident, is created as a by-product in nuclear reactors. Nuclear exchange contracts between the British and American governments have existed since 1959, by which Britain exchanges plutonium for enriched uranium for use in its nuclear submarines. The USA is now reported to be short of plutonium for Trident.

Safety/operating experience

In the United States, there has not been a new order for a PWR since 1978. It is important to note that the decline of the US industry pre-dates the accident at Three Mile Island where a PWR came close to catastrophe in 1979. Nevertheless, one of the

difficulties for the PWR in the USA has been to satisfy the Government's safety standards and still keep the PWR economic compared to coal. The American Nuclear Regulatory Commission has identified some 15 unresolved safety problems associated with PWRs.

Where an accident does occur with a PWR, there is less time to react to it than

the two nuclear programmes, Trident and PWR, may not be unrelated

with other nuclear reactors. In fact, PWRs are inherently more unstable than the gas-cooled reactors which have until now been preferred in Britain. This is an important reason why there remains a lobby within the CEBG which favours the AGR in preference to the PWR.

Moreover, the larger a PWR, the more unstable it is considered to be. Yet the PWR proposed for Sizewell would be one of the largest PWRs anywhere in the world. The operating experience of such PWRs is therefore correspondingly low. There is significant operating experience in the USA of only three PWRs of comparable size to Sizewell 'B'. None of these are of the standardised design, known as SNUPPS, on which the design for Sizewell 'B' is based. There is no operating experience of the SNUPPS design in the USA, where there are currently two such PWRs under construction.

There have, in any case, been design changes to SNUPPS which are claimed to reduce the cost of Sizewell 'B' while increasing safety. Design changes were made very hurriedly by a 'task force' led by Sir Walter Marshall (who has since become chairman of the CEBG) in the early part of last year when the original design proposed by the American corporations, Westinghouse and Bechtel, was found to be too expensive. In the design of nuclear power stations, there is a trade-off between safety and cost. But in the case of Sizewell 'B' it is claimed, effectively, that Britain will build an American PWR cheaper, safer and quicker than the Americans can achieve. This seems — to put it mildly — rather implausible.

It is important for the CEBG to assume that no significant design changes will be necessary for PWRs which may follow Sizewell 'B', so that maximum benefit can be achieved from pre-fabrication and costs kept down. The CEBG is anxious to avoid the extremely expensive experience with the AGRs, where less pre-fabrication is possible and important design changes were made as

each reactor was constructed. However, the reality is that the design for Sizewell 'B' is a desk-study of a reactor with no operating experience. A number of the design aspects of Sizewell 'B', including some of the emergency arrangements, have not been tested before. If Sizewell 'B' is eventually built, we will be witnessing yet another prototype.

The PWR lobby

From his experience as Secretary of State for Energy, Tony Benn has described the PWR lobby as the most powerful lobby he has come across during his time as Minister. The lobby in favour of the PWR exists both within and outside the Department of Energy. Brian Sedgemore, Benn's Parliamentary Private Secretary when he was at the Department of Energy, has described the 'power struggle' that took place at the Department between Benn and his civil servants¹⁰ who, because of his opposition to the PWR, by-passed him and briefed the 'Think Tank' that reported directly to the Prime Minister.

Not unlike many other high technology industries requiring heavy capital investment, a stable domestic market is a pre-requisite for the opening of lucrative export markets. Partly because of its poor construction record, and partly because it is unique to Britain, not a single AGR has been exported. The company which hopes to benefit particularly from the export potential of the PWR is GEC, headed by Lord Weinstock. GEC is very influential within the National Nuclear Corporation, the sole remaining industrial consortium sponsored by the Government to construct nuclear power stations.

Weinstock has an agreement to construct Westinghouse PWRs in collaboration with French manufacturers whereby the pressure vessels would be produced in France and the turbines by GEC. As Sedgemore writes: '(in 1978)...what they (GEC) wanted was a system which would enable them to sell their turbines and reactor internals abroad more effectively and this could only mean a PWR...His (Weinstock's) basic interest was not in PWRs at all but in developing a new turbo-generating industry with 3,000pm turbo-generators. These he could export. But he needed to test the new technology involved and this could only be done if the Government ordered a PWR and allowed him to supply the generators for testing...' In short he wanted the Government to pay for the development costs of his new technology.

Weinstock lost that particular battle, but less than two years later, the Tory govern-

ment agreed to press ahead and order a PWR. If there is a hierarchy that surrounds decision making about nuclear reactors, clearly export potential comes higher than concern about relative safety.

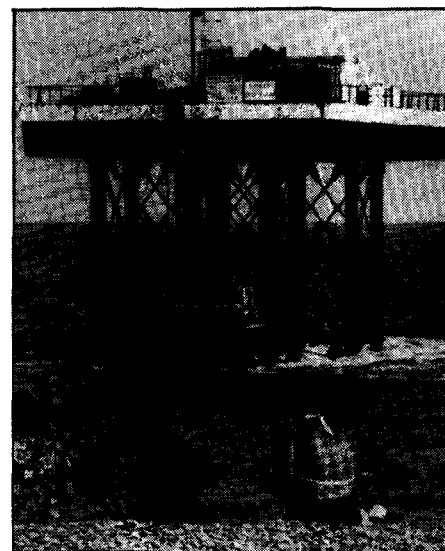
The public inquiry

It may seem strange that orders should be made for the PWR in parallel to the public inquiry. But there is really nothing odd about it at all. It is not the role of the inquiry to make policy. The Government, by having a public inquiry, is not abdicating its right to make policy and to pursue it. The Government has decided that it wants to build a PWR, and the CEBG have made it pretty clear that they intend future power stations to be PWRs. The next site, after Sizewell, has already been chosen — Hinkley Point in Somerset. Areas with potential future sites include Wales, Scotland, Northumberland, Kent and Dorset. The Government recently appointed Sir Walter Marshall as chairman of the CEBG. Sir Walter, formerly chairman of the Atomic Energy Authority and head of the task-force on the PWR, may not know much about coal, which currently accounts for over 80% of the fuel used by the CEBG, but he knows plenty about PWRs.

The Sizewell inquiry is not a national inquiry about whether or not the PWR should be introduced into Britain. It is a local public inquiry into the CEBG's application to build a PWR at Sizewell. At the same time, it has been made abundantly clear that future inquiries, into any PWRs after Sizewell, will be 'site-specific' only. This means that 'general' issues such as the PWR's safety and the outlook for electricity demand, which has fallen drastically every few years for over 20 years, will not be re-opened.

This ambiguity about the inquiry's status is in line with the Government's view that it 'might make more rapid progress towards its objective by a *low profile approach* which avoided putting the Government into a position of confrontation with the protesters.'¹¹ (My emphasis). From the Government's point of view, the inquiry's role is to help increase public acceptability of the PWR.

The Government would be well pleased if the objectors were limited to environmental groups. But opposition to the PWR is very much broader than that. The opposition to the PWR can use the inquiry as a platform from which to make visible the breadth of opposition to the PWR of key interest groups such as the emergency service, transport and construction workers and the local authorities whose areas would be affected by a serious accident. Objections at



Offshore water outlet at Sizewell

the public inquiry by representative organisations such as trade unions and local authorities can play an important role — but only if they are made in the context of the broader campaign. This is the approach taken, for example, by the ANC.

The opposition

The Government's choice of the PWR as the basis of its expanded nuclear power programme has had the effect of broadening the base of support for opposition. This is particularly the case in East Anglia and other

until recently there has been surprisingly little concern among trade unions about energy policy

areas which already have a nuclear power station; and in the trade union movement.

The trade unions are extremely important because it is their members who would be directly involved in constructing and operating a PWR; and in attempting to contain an accident. Until recently, however, there has been surprisingly little concern among trade unions about energy policy. Within the TUC, the formulation of energy policy is the

⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, 7 March, 1978.

⁶ Leaked Cabinet Minutes of 23 October, 1979, published in the national press.

⁷ Colin Sweet *The Costs of Nuclear Power* ANC 1982. £1.25 from ANC National Office, PO Box 216, Sheffield S1 1BD.

⁸ C Komanoff, *Power Plant Cost Escalation*, New York, 1981.

⁹ Colin Sweet, *op cit*.

¹⁰ Brian Sedgemore *The Secret Constitution*, 1980, Chapter 4, 'Power Struggles at the Department of Energy'.

¹¹ Leaked Cabinet minutes, *op cit*.

responsibility of the Fuel and Power Industries Committee, on which are represented the unions with members in the energy sector, including power engineering. Most of the unions represented have members employed in the nuclear industry, the main exception being the NUM. A number are opposed to both the PWR and to any increase in the proportion of electricity generated by nuclear power; whatever their view of nuclear power generally, none of these unions are ardent supporters of the PWR. ASTMS, for example, which has many members in the nuclear industry, is playing an active part in the recently established Campaign Against the PWR.

The GMWU, the union with the largest number of members working in nuclear power installations, is opposed to the PWR on the basis of need, cost and safety and takes the view that 'there is no case for changing the balance between coal-fired and nuclear-fired stations. A 15 GW programme of nuclear power stations would have the effect of prematurely closing coal-fired stations.'¹²

A number of unions outside the TUC Fuel and Power Committee are also taking a major interest. Members of unions representing emergency service workers in the fire, ambulance and hospital services would

actually have to deal with an accident arising from the operation of a PWR — either with the reactor itself or with the transportation of its irradiated waste fuel. COHSE (health service workers), NUPE (ambulance and health service workers) and the Fire Brigades Union are all actively involved in the Campaign Against the PWR. Support for the campaign also extends to transport, construction and agricultural workers in the TGWU and UCATT.

At the last Labour Party conference, a resolution opposed to the siting of a PWR 'at Sizewell or anywhere else in the United Kingdom on the basis of need, cost and safety' and for a coal production target of 200 million tonnes a year was passed overwhelmingly on a card vote by a ratio of 4½ votes to 1. This vote means that the majority of unions affiliated to the Labour Party support total opposition to the PWR.

In East Anglia, the Eastern Region TUC, and many of the individual unions, are also opposed to the PWR, including some of the unions with members working in Sizewell 'A' — the Magnox nuclear power station that has been operating next to the Sizewell 'B' site since 1966. A number of local authorities — whose areas may be the reluctant hosts of future PWRs; be affected by an accident, or have irradiated PWR fuel

transported through them — are also opposed to the PWR. A broad-based National Campaign Against the PWR was launched by the ANC at a national rally and conference in London last autumn. The rally brought together over 1,000 people, mainly representatives of the trade unions, political parties, environmental and other national and local organisations actively opposed to the PWR. Certainly not all the groups and organisations are anti-nuclear. But all are opposed to the PWR.

The decision about the PWR is not one of technical choice that will be decided simply by debate at the inquiry. If this were the case, then there would be public funds available to ensure that the fullest case could be put against the PWR and there would have been a more serious attempt at reaching agreement about the procedures to be adopted. But only the CEBG and the other official bodies in support of the PWR are in receipt of public funds — at a 'public' inquiry. The Tory government is set on its programme of PWRs if it can be sure of public acquiescence. For them it is an important political issue. It should be high on the agenda for the labour movement as well. □

¹² *Energy: Planning for the future*, GMWU, 1981.

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Doug Cook

Lessons of the NHS dispute

The recent health workers dispute was a remarkable affair. In many respects it was a new kind of dispute: the unity of the health workers themselves, the solidarity shown by many other workers, the role of the TUC Health Committee and the long-drawn and diverse nature of the action pursued.

The reorganisation of the health service in 1974 set the scene for the development of a new outlook and a rapid increase in the membership of the affiliated trade unions. Up until then, the vast majority of the staff were employed by hospital management committees which were often community based. Arising out of the reorganisation, new, large and remote authorities were established. Many staff were uprooted and compulsorily transferred to other locations. The reaction from employees was to seek protection, and unions steadily recruited workers at all levels.

There was no real stability following this reorganisation, the services being the subject of cuts before the newly proposed establishment had been filled and many posts within the new structure were subsequently frozen. Within the space of five years, the NHS began moving towards another reorganisation but one which was set against a background of growing cuts with hospital and ward closures, a tightening of cash limits and increasing pressure from the Government to privatise many of the support services. Meanwhile, from 1974 health service pay lagged, both relatively and absolutely, behind that of workers in the private sector and other public service workers.

The dispute

It is against this background that we must examine the eight months of industrial action by the health workers.

The scene for the dispute was set by the fact that, irrespective of differing settlement dates for the individual Whitley Councils covering separate groups of staff, the health service unions on this occasion took what must be seen as a both unique and historic decision, namely to submit a joint claim (12%) for all negotiating councils and to pursue that claim with the strategy and tactics in the hands of the TUC Health Committee, on which are represented all the health service unions. The subsequent offer of the 4% norm by the Government was greeted with derision by the workforce and made industrial action inevitable.

Following pressure from the TUC Health Services Committee, and a sympathetic public opinion encouraged by media support, on March 8 the Secretary of State announced in the Commons that extra sums of money would be made available for certain categories of NHS staff. In effect, it provided cash limits of 6.4% for nurses, midwives and professions supplementary to medicine, and 5% for ambulance staff and pharmacists. The majority of NHS staff would remain at 4%. The proposals were rejected as being divisive, which of course was the intention, and inadequate.

The response from the TUC Health Committee was immediate

and action was taken to reduce the service to accident and emergency only by pulling out key groups of workers on permanent strike and involving other groups in activity which contributed towards the reduction of the service whilst they continued to undertake the majority of their work. National one day stoppages by health workers were organised on the 19 May, 4 and 8 June and a continuing ban was imposed on certain work not directly related to patient care.

The speed and intensity of the action brought a fairly rapid response from the Government, with new proposals of 7.5% for nurses, midwives and professions supplementary to medicine, 6.5% for ambulance staff and pharmacists, and 6% for all other staff. The offer was rejected by the TUC on similar grounds to previously—their inadequacy and divisiveness—but also because the Government was not proposing to fund the increases completely but expected money to be found by the Health Service itself.

Further days of nationwide industrial action throughout the NHS were called for by the TUC and a more intensive programme for the withdrawal of selected key workers was put into effect. The action by health service workers now received widespread support from trade unionists in both the private and public sector. Many sections of workers, including miners and car workers, came out in official, semi-official and unofficial solidarity action which was on a scale unprecedented in recent years. At the same time, lobbies of parliament were organised by various regions. This offensive culminated in both regional and national demonstrations on 22 September, which received tremendous support from trade unionists and the public, and proved to be a massive show of solidarity with the NHS and its employees. On that day more than a million workers in various parts of Britain demonstrated their support and London welcomed and embraced the health service workers with a friendship and solidarity unprecedented in recent history. Why then did the campaign not succeed?

The lessons

The rolling programme of regional action, called for in the immediate aftermath of the week of intensive action failed because the TUC did not appreciate the mood at the grass roots and the time needed to organise and win support for the action. The last minute cancellation of the Transport—Health Workers day of action planned for early November effectively brought to an end all industrial action.

The failure of the TUC Health Committee to plan in advance a broad strategy for action culminating in a final call for all out strike action with accident and emergency services only being maintained was a fundamental weakness in the campaign. As a consequence, the workers in the regions and districts had no clear perspective of what was wanted and when. Actions were planned as one-off events, and only after they had taken place was further action considered. Thus TUC decisions were often taken too late for unions and stewards to organise the best possible response. The Transport—Health Service day of action was from the outset marked by confusion and was followed by disaster when it was cancelled without notice.

Whatever the weakness of TUC strategy however, it should be clearly understood that they were endeavouring to pull together 12 trade unions, many of whose members were not wholly committed to industrial action. Some found industrial action abhorrent in a caring service like health, while others were anxious to keep their heads down in a situation of redundancies, cuts and reorganisation.

A major lesson arising from the dispute is the need for TUC unions to maintain unity at all levels both in respect of pay negotiations and the campaign to maintain services and oppose privatisation. In this context the role of the professional bodies, notably the Royal College of Nursing, proved a considerable problem during the dispute. Nurses, of course, were a crucial element in the campaign and the RCN itself was at times neutralised. But the TUC

unions must consider whether the present negotiating machinery with the new health authorities should be re-constituted so as to exclude these bodies.

The essential link between pay and cuts in the service, a factor related to the refusal of the Government to fund the full pay award, made it possible for the TUC to build a united campaign involving the trade union movement and the public and it became a focal point for much sympathetic media attention. The tide of anger against government policy needs to be maintained and developed with the establishment of broad based national and regional committees with the task of defending the National Health Service.

Throughout the whole period of the dispute, the TUC resisted pressure from those who urged an all out strike without emergency cover as a means of achieving a speedy solution. It is to the credit of all trade unionists that in spite of provocation from some belligerent managers, the accident and emergency cover was maintained almost

100% for nearly eight months. Many attempts were made by both government representatives and the more right wing elements of the media to demonstrate that a patient had died arising out of the action. No such case was ever found. The responsibility and caring of the workforce indeed is in sharp contrast to the attitude of Norman Fowler and the Government towards health care.

Health service staff have returned to work feeling bitter at the shabby treatment meted out by the present Government. They did not achieve anything like their original aim, but they certainly did not suffer a total defeat. The original offer of 4% for the first year was raised to 6% (7% for nurses), and that for the second year was raised from 3½% to 4½%. Moreover they have demonstrated their willingness to fight at a time when the trade union movement has been on the defensive. The unity which has been established must be maintained and can be used in the months ahead to defend the National Health Service. L

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BLACK FOOTBALLERS Peter Ball



up and down the country. In the first division there are now 22 black players appearing regularly, with another 7 or 8 on the fringes of the first teams. It is now a frequent enough occurrence to cause little surprise, yet even five years ago the number of black players in the first division could be counted on one's fingers, and the only reason for going onto the second hand was because West Bromwich Albion had three, Wolves two. Ten years ago the contrast was even more startling with Clyde Best of West Ham the only black footballer appearing regularly in the first division, and the widespread prejudice within the game held that black players lacked the moral and physical toughness, 'the bottle' in football jargon, to survive in the Football League—the toughest league in the world'. Although there are undoubtedly pockets of resistance inside the game, that myth has generally been laid quietly to rest, while the more subtle variation that 'they' are alright as forwards but don't make good defenders, let alone goalkeepers, is also in the process of disappearing. Central defenders like Chris Whyte at Arsenal, Noel Blake at Birmingham and Bob Hazell at QPR have overcome that one, while Manchester City's stunningly promising reserve goalkeeper Alec Williams looks likely to prove the point conclusively when he finally succeeds Joe Corrigan.

There are though divisions within the group. Many of the older group of players were West Indian born, although most grew up in England and one or two are of very unusual background for an English professional footballer. Cyrille Regis was born in French Guyana, and was eligible for a French cap until he was picked by England. More surprisingly John Barnes, one of Bobby Robson's young hopefuls, has an impeccable middle-class West Indian background. He came to England at 14, when his father was appointed military attache to London. A natural athlete, Barnes played rugby for Middlesex schools and was discovered playing in park football by Watford. In spite of that unlikely background, he broke into the first team inside a year of being at the club.

The rise of black footballers has received very visible confirmation in the last twelve months. Cyrille Regis, Luther Blissett and Mark Chamberlain all won England caps in 1982, to join their only predecessors, Viv Anderson and Laurie Cunningham, both recently excluded by injury, as the advance guard of the black players now found in increasing numbers in the Football League. Behind them are another group who are likely to join them in the near future and fulfil the recent prediction of the Football

Association's former head of coaching, Allan Wade, that the day would come when six or seven of the England team would be black. Danny Thomas and John Barnes have already been selected for the full England squad, and Chris Whyte, Garry Thompson and the recently out of favour Justin Fashanu were all members of last season's Under 21 team.

This reflects the situation in the Football League itself, where more and more young black players are breaking into the first teams

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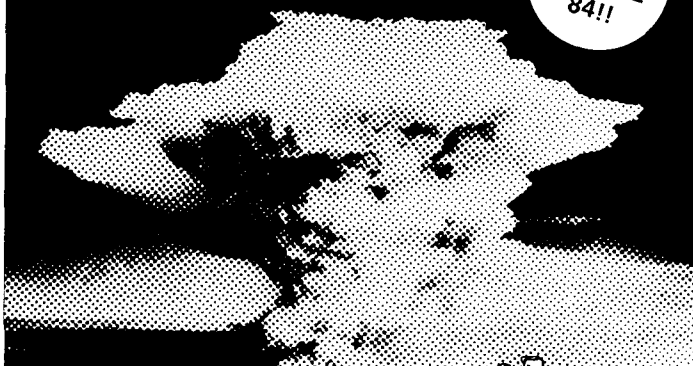
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But these stories are rare. Much more typical are the examples of Garth Crooks and Mark Walters, Aston Villa's richly promising young forward who has recently been keeping England winger Tony Morley out of the club side. Crooks was 'discovered' by Stoke manager Tony Waddington when he went outside to find out who the kid (Crooks was then 14) was who was driving him mad by constantly kicking a football against his office wall. Waddington found Crooks, and subsequently signed the player for Stoke. Walters, who grew up in Birmingham near the Villa ground, supported the club as a kid and recently recalled how he used to wait outside the ground until half-time, when the gates were opened and you could get in free, because he couldn't afford the entrance money. These are stories which many of the game's former greats would recognise as their own, with the exception that Crooks was actually kicking a football, while the Mannions, Steels, Carters, Lawtons and Matthews often had to make do with a rag ball, or, if they were lucky, a tennis ball.

That is significant, for it is hard not to conclude that the main distinguishing feature of the new generation of black players is that they are black-skinned rather than pink-skinned. Otherwise on the whole they fit comfortably in as inheritors of the tradition of great players coming from the British working class, and many from the poorest areas where football is one of the few escape routes from poverty. Most come from the areas in the big cities which have traditionally supplied professional footballers. If one of the richest sources historically, the North Eastern coalfields, has supplied none, it is because there was very little black immigration there in the 50s. But equally significantly most of the London born players come from the integrated working class communities, where they have been brought up in schools with a football tradition and an area steeped in football culture, and few from a 'ghetto' area like Brixton.

But it is also clear that there is some way to go before the integration is complete and black players are accepted totally as just footballers. If the high talents of Mark Chamberlain, John Barnes and Luther Blisset are the natural inheritors of Stanley Matthews, Tom Finney and Nat Lofthouse, the numbers breaking through in the lower divisions are smaller. The suspicion remains that black players have to be exceptional to make it, and until there are more ordinary ones around—and a percentage of bad black players—then English football will still be open to charges of discrimination, even if it is much less overt than a decade ago. □

A QUESTION OF SILENCE

Sarah Lefanu



A Question Of Silence is a feminist thriller about male violence. It is Marleen Gorris' first film and at this year's London Film Festival it provoked passionate reactions from both women and men. The film opens in London this month and will be shown in Newcastle, Leicester and Dundee in March.

A Question of Silence is an uncompromisingly feminist film about male violence that shows how its many different manifestations permeate the lives of all women.

Three women, a secretary, a housewife and a waitress in a cafe, ritualistically murder the manager of a boutique when he challenges Christine, the housewife, with shoplifting. A successful psychiatrist, Mrs Van den Bos, is employed to find out why these three women, who had never met each other before, should murder a stranger. She is expected to find them insane. The film develops like a thriller, but it is not the motives of the three women that are unravelled. It is the class-based and male-oriented assumptions of the psychiatrist that are revealed, to her and the audience, and challenged by what the women have done.

As the film opens we are shown the psychiatrist and her husband, a lawyer, at home. She is seducing him into having sex with her: they have a marriage that appears to be based on financial, emotional and sexual equality. They are a good-looking, successful couple. Yet as she becomes more involved in the lives of the three women she is investigating, so their relationship shifts to reveal the hidden imbalance of power on which it is built. The psychiatrist's realisation that the three women are not mad forces her into an identification with them, while her husband retreats first into the academicism of his profession, then into the use of sexual force against her and finally into an admission of the primacy of his career over hers. It is not the equality of their relationship that is threatened; that equality is shown to be illusory. It is the power invested in him as a man in a world governed by men for men. Yet it is part of the film's subtlety that the lawyer is not portrayed as a domineering bully, but as an ordinary man, selfish perhaps, but not unusually so.

As Mrs Van den Bos interviews the three



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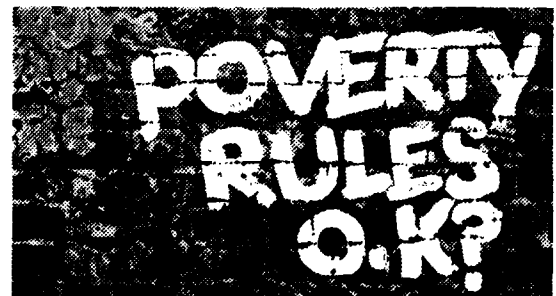
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women in the bland, hospital-like security of their prison, snatches of their lives are shown to us. Christine is silent. She retreats into herself and draws pictures of stick people, mother, father and children. Her husband says of her, 'She never had much to say'. Mrs Jongmann, the waitress, talks incessantly and laughs wildly. The noise she makes fills the silence of a solitary life. We are given one glimpse of her family, long since departed. When the psychiatrist asks her has she ever thought of remarrying, she howls with laughter and cries, 'Do me a favour'. Andrea, the secretary, appears the most self-assured and is the most successful in challenging the psychiatrist's assumptions. She knows that she is more intelligent than the men she works for, and knows why she remains powerless. She knows, too, that whatever men may think, other women will not think that she is mad, and she is proved right at the trial by the women who were silent witnesses to the murder.

The silence of women has been transformed from an imposition by men who won't listen to what women have to say into an instrument of power when women refuse to speak.

This is Marleen Gorris' first film, and she has been surprised by the passionate reactions it has provoked. She has found that many men have been bewildered by it, obsessed, like the lawyer, the judge and the police, with why the three women should kill a man who is a stranger to them. What many men seem unable to grasp is that the murder, although extremely violent—and, interestingly, the violence is expressed without one single glimpse of the body, which makes a change from present fashion—works as a metaphor for another kind of violence, the violence that is institutionalised in the power men have over women. *A Question of Silence* is no advertisement for murder, not even a call to women to react violently against the violence inflicted on them. It is, instead, a profound investigation of the daily oppression of women by men, across class and circumstance. It is also a very enjoyable film, full of gentle mockery at the increasing bewilderment of the male establishment and generous in its celebration of the solidarity between women. In the final scene in the courtroom, when the irate and baffled prosecutor, red in the face, shouts the question, 'What if three men had killed a woman?', the women can only laugh at the depths of his obtuseness. Their laughter is wild, uninhibited and infectious. It will be interesting to see the response of men in this country when the film is released. There is no doubt that women will appreciate its subversiveness. □

NEWS ON CHANNEL FOUR Brian McNair

The Broadcasting Act of 1981 required the Independent Broadcasting Association, with regards to Channel 4, 'to ensure that the programmes contain a suitable proportion of matter calculated to appeal to tastes and interests not generally catered for by ITV'. It had, in addition, 'to encourage innovation and experiment in the form and content of programmes'. Notwithstanding the IBA's obligation to maintain 'due impartiality' in all matters of 'political and industrial controversy', the widespread anticipation that Channel 4 would exert a radicalising influence on British broadcasting was clearly justified under the terms of the 1981 Act.

To what extent, then, has that anticipation been met? Let us first establish the limitations on what can legitimately be expected from Channel 4. It is not in any respect fundamentally different from the established broadcasting institutions, for the following reasons: it is a commercial public channel, subject to the ultimate control of a public authority while also being dependent on advertisers and thus on advertising; the dubious criteria of impartiality in broadcasting must be followed, as John Pilger has discovered to his cost with *The Truth Game*, postponed because of the need for 'balance'; and many of the programmes shown on Channel 4 are made by personnel applying the same journalistic and professional standards as have been frustratingly evident on the other three channels. There are, in short, structural and institutional similarities between the four channels which tend to minimise Channel 4's 'radical' content.

Furthermore, one cannot highlight the innovative developments of Channel 4 without stating that such things *can* happen on channels 1, 2 or 3. The *Open Door* programmes put out by BBC2 contained often excellent, highly politicised critiques of government policy, of media institutions and even, dare we admit it, of capitalist society itself. ITV allowed Jonathon Dingleby to express in *The Cold War Game* the almost heretical (for the established media) view that the GDR could provide full employment, adequate housing, and rising living standards for its people.

Now, it can be argued that the appearance of alternative viewpoints such as these on television is largely a consequence of opening doors to alternative voices—voices, in other words, different to those which routinely monopolise the airwaves. It is a question of access. The concept of access is not new as Lord Annan reported in 1977: 'For many years, it has been exercised by the leading political parties in the form of short party political broadcasts for which the broadcasters provide transmission time and if required the production facilities, but are seen to have no responsibility for the content of the programme'.

Until the advent of Channel 4, it has been the extension of this 'access' to community groups, campaigning organisations, and esteemed individuals with prestige such as Dingleby, which has provided the most interesting television on the old channels. Channel 4 is a progression however, in that it represents a partial institutionalisation of the concept; to a limited degree certainly, but it is there, and sanctioned in the law. Channel 4 must provide facilities and transmission time, as part of its brief, for groups previously excluded from television to produce programmes related to their own spheres of interest. It can in addition commission programmes from commercial companies like Central or Granada which are expressly designed to serve 'minority' groups. Unsurprisingly, this has led to some refreshing changes:

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trade unionism and its function in modern Britain. Where news and current affairs programmes most frequently present the British trade union movement as undemocratic, having excessive power, bearing responsibility for inflation, bad industrial relations and Britain's poor competitiveness, *Union World* begins from an entirely different set of premises. High-lighting a strike at Heathfield's of London, the dispute is put into its historical context: 'Unions have had a hard time organising in this Slough estate, but the workers in the plywood shop at Heathfield's, almost all black, joined the General and Municipal two years ago, and eventually won recognition from the company'. (*Union World*, November 6).

Attempting to contextualise an industrial dispute is not the stock-in-trade in conventional media reporting of trade unionism: 'Today that victory has a hollow ring. After they took action to improve their pay four months ago, twenty-one black trade unionists in the plywood shop were locked out, their jobs were immediately taken by non-union workers from an agency, initially all-white. A strike followed which quickly collapsed when some members were sacked'.

Thereafter the programme does not attempt to discuss the validity of the dispute, since this is taken for granted, but to raise questions concerning the trade union movement itself: 'There is another union at Heathfield's, the strong, left-leaning print union, SOGAT 82. Their 30-odd members are concentrated in the print shop. But despite the picket line and the non-union labour, the SOGAT men are refusing to back their black brothers and sisters in the G&M'.

Trade unionists are asked to explain their racism, a painful display of which we are confronted with in the shape of a SOGAT shop steward who simply refuses to condemn white scab workers in his factory, stating on camera that he doesn't 'owe' the black workers anything. Lest this be interpreted as an alternative form of union-bashing, however, we see also the efforts of other trade unionists to discipline their racist colleagues, and we are left in no doubt that the trade unions regard the problem as a serious one, threatening to undermine united action against an employer. The radical difference in this approach to trade unionism is that the debate has shifted away from the rantings of Scargill and Buckton-bashers towards a perception of what the trade union is for: to protect the interests of the worker, black and white, male and female, in a capitalist society.

Subsequent editions of *Union World* have continued in this vein, emphasising the role



Arthur Scargill

played by trade unions in the nitty-gritty of defending workers' rights; in dealing with the 'matter-of-fact' issues; in constituting an essential critical voice against government policies. A programme on pension-funds for example emphasised the TUC's demand for a new investment programme, controlled by the government and funded from the vast resources of pension funds, this being placed in direct contrast to the 'non-investment' policy of the Tories and financial capital.

When one thinks of the 'bully-boy-saboteur-militant-wrecker' image of effective trade unionism so common in the British media, we are entitled to claim this kind of approach as an advance, although *The Times* TV correspondent thought otherwise: 'Trade union affairs spend a long time being stupefyingly boring before they get interesting, and it is an inflexible fact of life that only a handful of unionists have the patience to stay through the boring bits'. And to emphasise what he regarded as the more relevant aspect of trade unionism: 'There was one compensation however: Arthur Scargill had refused to be on the programme because of some supposed disagreement with Granada'. It is of course precisely the attempt to move away from personalities and sensationalising which makes *Union World* the advance that it is.

Union World exemplifies what can be expected when access to television is made just that little bit easier, and when production companies are given just that little bit more flexibility in their choice of subject-matter. There are others on Channel 4 of which similar points could be made (*Opinions*, *The Friday Alternative*), and a greater extension of access still will lead inevitably to a new kind of broadcasting — one which will, incidentally, reflect the strength of socialist and Marxist ideas in our society.

For the Left in Britain, it is clear that our fundamental demand in the area of the media has been vindicated: be it the press or

television, the only way to develop a media which can express the needs and interests of a people — in all its complexity — is to campaign for the extension of rights of access. The democratisation of the media is not a new demand, but in programmes like *Union World*, we can begin to see what it will look like when it comes.

Channel 4 proves, if proof were needed, that Britain's broadcasting institutions are not the tools of a monolithic ruling class, and that they are subject to change. To test the limits of this capacity for change, the movement must demand more strongly rights of access and make of them a reality. The Communist Party above all, knowing as it does the value of an alternative media, must be in the forefront of such a campaign, creating in the wider movement an awareness that the media institutions as they develop will create new possibilities for 'putting the case'. These opportunities must not be missed. □

THE RISE OF THE SLOPES

Maria Loftus

1982 saw the unusual phenomenon of a British skier, Konrad Bartelski, emerging as almost a household name. The venue for his triumph, Val Gardina, where he came second in the Men's Downhill, may seem a far cry from the terraces of Wembley, the setting for what has historically been our mass sport. However, with television assuming a central role in providing spectator sport and giving attention to a wider range of sporting interests plus increased cooperation between the networks on a world scale, there is now greater coverage of the events of world class skiing. Saturday sports programmes through the winter generally include live skiing transmissions and at tea time on Sunday you can tune in to watch highlights from the three disciplines of Alpine sports, Slalom, Giant Slalom and Downhill Racing. As a result skiing as a spectator sport is growing in popularity. The latest survey carried out by the British Market Research Bureau¹ shows that 30.5% of adults questioned liked to watch it on television which

¹ Target Group Index

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compares favourably with the number for football (38.7%).

If the popular BBC2 programme *Ski Sunday* has done much to promote skiing then the standard of commentary, which has improved over the years, has also helped. Even the most confirmed critic would be hard pushed to describe David Vine as uninformed.

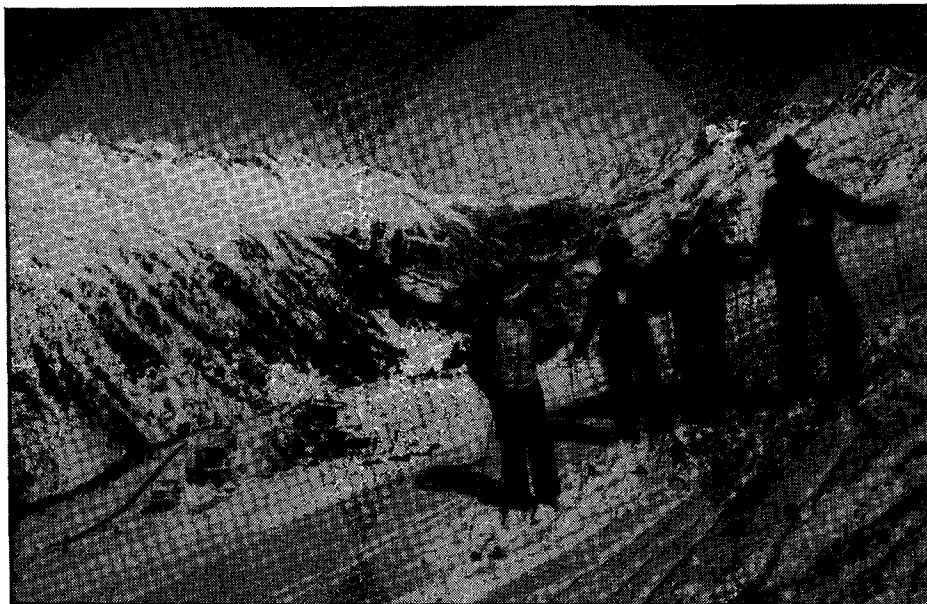
Given increased exposure it is not difficult to see why, according to this survey, skiing now has the edge on golf, swimming and cricket. Essentially it provides all the elements of a compelling spectacle: speed and danger combined with dramatic action. John Samuel, the sports editor of *The Guardian*, recently described one of skiing's most famous races, The Mahnenkamn Downhill, as 'not simply one of the great events of ski racing', but 'one of the classic occasions of world sport'.

Although watching sport continues to be a very popular pastime, there has been a swing away from the passive spectator lifestyle in favour of active participation. More people have been prepared to try out a wider range of sporting activities and allocate a greater proportion of their income to these.

This may help to explain the growth of skiing as a recreational activity. The number of people in Britain taking skiing holidays has grown considerably and an estimated 1.6m people in the UK now describe themselves as skiers. With the recession curtailing holidays and the rest of the winter holiday market static, a number of tour operators have switched to skiing as an area of expansion.

To understand the attractions of a skiing holiday we should be aware of the revolution that has occurred in the pattern of leisure during the last decade. To large sections of the population concentrated in our cities, activities like skiing which involve movement, the acquisition of physical skills and the overcoming of natural obstacles have a strong and growing appeal. Set as it is in beautiful natural surroundings, skiing can provide a release from the tensions of modern living. Moreover, people have come to regard physical activity as an essential ingredient of a healthy life and to perceive recreation as having the potential for achievement of personal goals.

This then provides part of the background to the steady increase in the number of people in the UK taking Alpine skiing holidays over the last few years. No firm figures exist, but it can be estimated that in 1950 it was 20,000 in 1960 70,000, in 1970 120,000 and this season about 450,000 (of whom 150,000 will be in school groups which is now an important part of the market).



Our own domestic industry has seen a similar expansion. The four Scottish ski resorts now attract between them 50,000 visitors a year which does not include the large numbers of Scots who regularly ski. Glenshee alone has the capacity to handle 9,000 an hour and has recently invested in a snow making machine. If skiing on artificial snow seems contrived, skiers in this country are also prepared to ski on plastic, much to the amusement of the French. We have more dry slopes than any other country in the world, nearly 90 sited throughout the UK and in 1980-81 alone two million hours of individual skiing took place on them.

The growing numbers of people now taking to their skis — particularly in the Alps — reflects a widening of the social constituency from which skiers are drawn. Though skiing, and Alpine skiing in particular, is not a cheap sport and thus remains more accessible to higher income groups, it can certainly no longer be said to be the exclusive playground of the rich or jet set.

Growth in the British ski market has been paralleled by the expansion of skiing in Western and Eastern Europe, N America and Japan. But its development in the Alps — as the main centre of skiing in Europe — is of particular interest. In addition to an expanding holiday trade, the cult of the long weekend has played an important role. Throughout the season, Friday nights see the Gare de Lyons in Paris packed with skiers boarding overnight trains to the Alps and also a major exodus of motorists from large cities such as Milan and Munich to the many resorts all within driving distance.

The development of Alpine skiing has required large sums of money, much of which has come from private ski entrepre-

neurs. But generally governments and local councils have been no less eager to lend their support, seeing the potential for the economic development of areas which otherwise are remote, depressed and depopulating. Thus the last decade or so has witnessed the higher reaches of the mountains of the Alps being opened up by vast networks of lifts, whilst the quantity and quality of pistes to be skied has been extended by the armies of Ratrac machines beating down tons of snow.

Those with an interest in conservation may have watched these Alpine developments with apprehension. However, there seems to have been little of the active opposition from environmentalists so strong in the States and recently so effective in Scotland, where the Secretary of State has turned down a request for the development of Lurcher Gully in the Cairngorms. Part of the reason for this (though by no means the only one) may be a degree of co-operation between ski interests and conservationists. In the French resort of Méribel, for example, a recently installed complex of gondola lifts involved pylons being flown in at considerable expense by helicopter to avoid tractors and heavy lorries ripping up the valley.

Skiing has now arrived as one of Europe's most popular sports. Obviously the opportunities for the English and Welsh are more restricted than for most people in continental Europe or Scotland. Nevertheless, even in these countries there has been a big increase. Hopefully over the next decade further expansion will widen the social constituency of skiers even further as the relative price of skiing falls and the appetite of a new generation is whetted through school ski holidays. □

Reviews

THE ANTI-SOCIAL FAMILY
Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh.
 Verso, 1982 pbk £3.95
 ISBN 0 86091 751 7

This book sets out to make a socialist-feminist critique of the family both as a social institution and as an ideology. They argue that instead of talking about the decline of the family we ought to be speaking of the pervasive familial character of society or what they call the ideology of familism. The book is in four chapters. The first two consider the family from the point of view of what needs it is thought to serve and how the family is represented culturally. The third chapter explains how the acquisition of femininity and masculinity is understood and critically assesses the work of Donzelot and Lasch, in particular, as well as historians and sociologists in general. The final chapter is devoted to a discussion of possible strategies for change in the area of state policies and the law.

Overall the book is provocative and stimulating. The third chapter is a very succinct critique of Donzelot and Lasch and it will be interesting to see how those on the Left who have received Lasch's work with approval will respond. (I don't, though, think that the authors should have been surprised that his anti-feminism was no bar to his obtaining credence on the Left). However, in a short book there is inevitably some telescoping of the arguments and a need to generalise and simplify and I felt there were times when this confused rather than clarified the issues and concepts. For example, in the first two chapters, but not in the third where the concepts are examined much more carefully, there appeared in places to be a confusion about family meaning couple, family meaning household and family conforming to the image in the popular ideology of which they are rightly so critical, namely co-resident parents and young children. Single people and people living alone have families and a case could be

made for arguing that we invest in marriage as much, if not more than, in families in the stereotypical sense.

Families with dependent children are not given material privileges in Britain to the extent found in many other societies. Of course this may be partly because we do not rear our powerful male elite in families. Instead they are removed from their parents and siblings to spend most of their childhood in single-sex institutions. As a result they know and understand little of women and children and their allegiance to their peer group is very strong. In the context of British society this makes for powerful resistance to change. The authors clearly approve of childrearing systems which strengthen commitments to one's peers and weaken them to individual kin but this would not *necessarily* make for a more caring society.

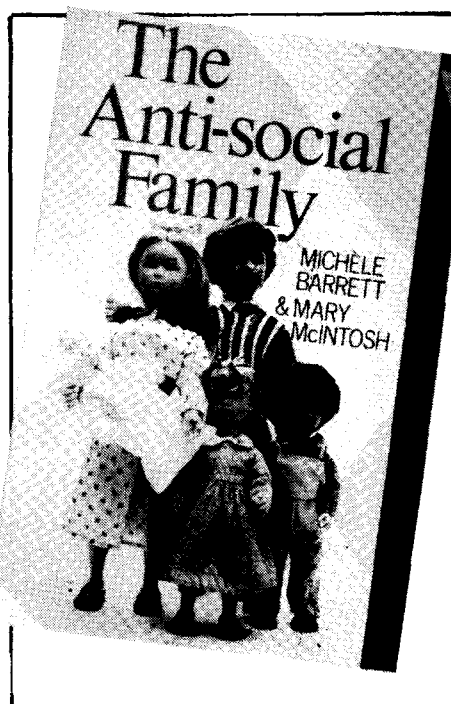
In other places they talk of children, forgetting to distinguish between boys and girls. There is not *one* single typical personality whose features they describe as including

'a need to form intimate one-to-one ties to the exclusion of a more diffused bond to a wider group, a tendency to go it alone as an individual and a lack of concern for group support and approval of group interests.' As they discuss elsewhere in the book, family-based child rearing produces very important gender *differences*.

There are inevitable tensions between family and state because the development of the state has required changing kinship-based patterns of responsibilities, loyalties and rewards. I would have welcomed more discussion of this. For example, commenting on the disarmament poster which announces how much the average British family spends annually on arms they say that 'it is as citizens and not as families that we should be protesting about arms spending'. But in this instance does there have to be a conflict? Why can't we oppose nuclear war as families *and* as citizens? Having children is in one sense giving a hostage to the future. Families comprise a very powerful institution in any society for structuring continuity between the generations as they acknowledge in other parts of the book. Indeed if the family were a weaker institution how would we structure obligations between generations, particularly involving the older generations whose productive and reproductive life is over? Increasing peer group allegiances might make this harder not easier.

I would also have welcomed more discussion about the state and its structures in the final chapter. As Mary McIntosh has pointed out elsewhere, there is a contradiction in the demands feminists make that the state should provide more and in feminist criticisms of the state as a set of institutions which oppress women. What kind of state institutions do we want to administer the policies on taxation, housing, social security, etc, outlined in this chapter? I for one would have liked to know more about the context within which both families and state policies would change. But that, no doubt, would have meant a longer book.

Hilary Land



FEMININE SEXUALITY**Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose**

Macmillan 1982 pbk £5.95

ISBN 0 333 341554

FEMINISM AND PSYCHO-ANALYSIS: the daughter's seduction**Jane Gallop**

Macmillan 1982 pbk £5.95

ISBN 0 333 294726

To many socialists and feminists, psychoanalysis remains an esoteric area, too inaccessible to be of any use in understanding our everyday political struggles. Add the name of Jacques Lacan, the late French psychoanalyst, and its accessibility seems even more remote. Yet psychoanalysis is one of the 20th century's most important philosophical revolutions, a revolution no less radical in its implications than the work of Marx.

Sigmund Freud's views of human sexuality are as controversial today as they were in his own lifetime. Part of the controversy was initiated by other psychoanalysts and followers, such as Freud's biographer Ernest Jones, Karl Abraham and Karen Horney, who all disagreed about Freud's assumptions on the nature of female sexuality. These psychoanalytical debates of the 1920s and 30s have resurfaced, re-cast with a new urgency and motivated by a new force, namely feminism. Feminists have been no less critical of Freud's views than the psychoanalysts just mentioned: Juliet Mitchell's earlier book *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* is by far the best and most readable account of the debate between Freud and the feminists.

However, something was missing from that book, something rectified by these two new publications, namely Freud's so-called 'French Revolution' associated with Jacques Lacan and his school. *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* by Jane Gallop is quite a demanding book, offering a Lacanian perspective on some of the chapters in this historical debate. The book edited by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose offers us a collection of new translations from the work of Lacan and his school, the Ecole Freudienne, and provides two very useful introductions to this whole area. In this review I will indicate a few of the contours of the debate, rather than comment too much on the specific content of the books.

Freud's work gave us a complex theory of sexuality which was original in at least two important respects. First, Freud radically extended the field of sexuality beyond simply normal, adult heterosexuality into infantile or childhood sexuality and to what we

normally think of as the 'perversions'. Secondly, he opposed the view that 'the sexual' was simply a natural and given instinct, just like hunger. To Freud, we are *made* male and female, we come to *acquire* our sexual identities through the process of what he called the Oedipus complex. Early on in Freud's thinking he tended to discuss the little girl's development in the same way as that of the little boy. However, in his later writings, he directed his efforts at understanding what was specific about the girl or what was specific about the nature of femininity.

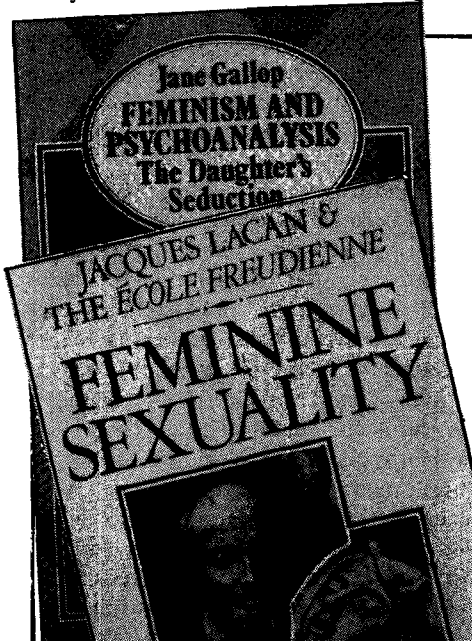
Consider a couple of implications of Freud's discoveries. First, feminists are obviously opposed to the ideology which assumes that women, in their identity and status, are determined by nature rather than society. An ideology which says we are determined by nature is a reactionary one because it means things cannot be other than what is ordained by nature. Psychoanalysis offers us one of the ways of understanding the social acquisition of our sexual identity and the difficulty which is inherent in achieving it; sometimes that difficulty can become a neurosis. At the same time, psychoanalysis warns us against viewing 'masculinity' and 'femininity' as social roles which are then more or less consciously adopted by males and females.

Secondly, the Freudian view that there is not a simple normality to our sexuality, given at birth, enables us to rethink non-heterosexual relations: not only 'gay' relations (Freud regarded the homosexual as neither degenerate nor ill) but the whole gamut of pleasures and sensuality associated with sex, including mothering. Psychoanalysis is often accused of normalising indi-

viduals, making them fit into a rigid order. In the 1950s, many Marxists condemned psychoanalysis as 'bourgeois ideology' or as individualism. But, if we look deeper, we can see how Freud actually contested a rigid division between the supposedly 'normal' and 'abnormal' and he certainly rejected contemporary psychiatric notions of 'degeneracy'. These points should underline how crucial and radical a theory psychoanalysis is. Lacan's version of Freud equally stands opposed to the idea that psychoanalysis is about restoring people to a single norm or normality.

Psychoanalysis has transformed what it means to talk about the personal and how we *become* a person in the first place. Here, one is reminded of the slogan of modern feminism, 'the personal is political'. This slogan is an important one because it quite rightly challenges previous tendencies of putting 'the personal' into some kind of political quarantine and concentrating on supposedly more real and objective types of struggle. We now realise that the personal is every bit as real and significant in politics as anything else. What I think needs to be extended in this particular slogan is some recognition that the personal not only include *conscious* and *experienced* wishes or needs, but also *unconscious* wishes. Hence the contribution of psychoanalysis. Now it may seem a weird and elusive idea that we could ever 'reform' the unconscious, but I would suggest that we can be helped to understand what politics is about if we take the unconscious into account. For example, the *hold* of conservative ideologies around, say, the family or authority, can be partly explained in terms of the symbolic meaning which these ideas involve, evoking our *own* past family experiences and authority figures. Perhaps fascist ideology was successful to the extent that it too managed to evoke powerful images of the 'motherland' and the leader as a Father.

The psychoanalysis and feminism debate cannot be easily settled or terminated: the ground it covers is a vast one. Feminists will continue to have some major reservations about using Freud and will question some of his central concepts, of the Oedipus complex, of castration, of the theory of the difference between male and female. I would add that books such as these help us to decide whether the Freud being criticised is not sometimes a caricature and simplification. Whatever conclusion we come to, it is undeniable that we still have much to learn from Freud and that the relevance of psychoanalysis is by no means confined to the psychoanalyst's couch.

Martin Weegmann

THE LUCAS PLAN: A NEW TRADE UNIONISM IN THE MAKING?

Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott
Allison and Busby, London 1982 £2.95
ISBN 085031 4305

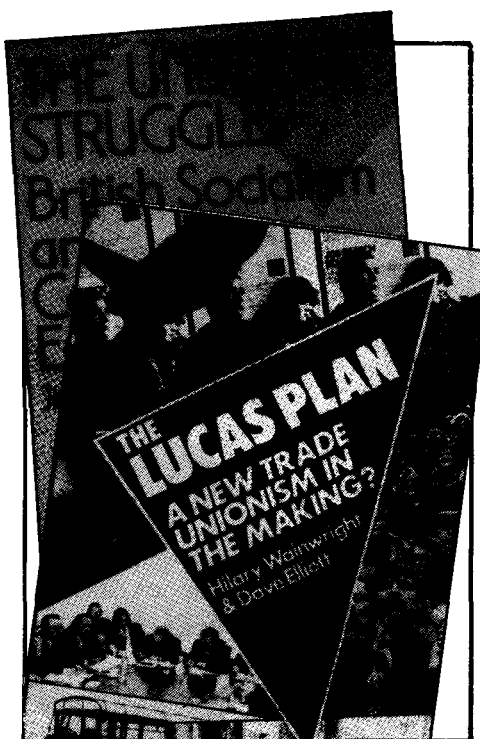
THE UNEQUAL STRUGGLE? BRITISH SOCIALISM AND THE CAPITALIST ENTERPRISE

Jim Tomlinson
Methuen, London, 1982 £3.95
ISBN 41633 1602

These two books provide a timely introduction to socialist assessments of the economic and political character of the modern business enterprise. In *The Lucas Plan* Hilary Wainwright and Dave Elliott chart the rise (and fall?) of the Lucas Combine's attempt to develop what are termed 'socially useful' products as a response to the management's plans to rationalise their UK operations. These plans would inevitably have led to widespread and rapid redundancies. Jim Tomlinson is concerned with a somewhat wider project. *The Unequal Struggle?* sets out to appraise the general attitudes adopted by socialist writers (in the UK mainly) towards the capitalist enterprise. These have been generally hostile and dismissive, he argues, and in the final chapter Tomlinson draws on his critique of the way the capitalist enterprise has been conceptualised to press for a more 'open' approach towards the possible development of socialist objectives within these.

Whilst *The Lucas Plan* sets up the analysis very much in terms of a rather traditional 'them and us' or 'management and worker' framework, *The Unequal Struggle?* is more subtle — seeing the capitalist enterprise as a *locus* in which competing and diverse tendencies and directions of initiative can co-exist. Of course it is partly unfair to compare these two books as though they were addressing the same concerns in the same way. One is a very detailed account of a particular company over a difficult but limited period of time whilst the other is about theoretical concerns and forms of conceptualisation of the capitalist enterprise in a general manner.

By any view the Lucas Plan was a fascinating and enterprising attempt by the employees of the company to preserve their jobs. The struggles to develop their alternative ideas, to test some of these with prototypes, and to win realistic support for at least the possibility of producing them provides an important lesson and chapter in recent trade union history and makes for entertaining as well as instructive reading.



But there are some real weaknesses with the approach that this book adopts. Perhaps the most obvious of these concerns the assessment offered of the conditions of possibility of this kind of initiative really getting off the ground, and the more general implications that can be drawn from this particular attempt.

In the absence of a nationally agreed industrial strategy it would seem unlikely that the range of products developed in the Combine Plan could be successfully produced and marketed, let alone this kind of plan forming the basis or inspiration for similar ones to be developed in other large industrial enterprises in the UK. This is not an argument against the trade unionists pressing their case but only for seeing this as inevitably limited in its possibility of success as a means of preserving jobs. In a way the plan was *too* ambitious rather than not being ambitious enough.

Secondly, the whole idea of 'socially useful' production remains relatively unexplored in the book. The Lucas Combine pressed for the substitution of arms production with the production of such things as combined road-rail vehicles, cheap domestic space heaters, advanced medical technology and the like. All of these are clearly 'useful' but the question this raises is how far would it have been possible for this substitution to be pushed given the demand characteristics of the economy as a whole and the expenditure patterns of the nationalised transport undertakings and the NHS in particular? The fact that this range of products was technically feasible and

'socially useful' is no argument that they would provide a financially and economically viable series of products. To press the argument further for a moment, we need to question whether armament production is as socially wasteful as tends to be made out. Clearly this is *one* of the UK's most successful industries measured in terms of international competitiveness and in the absence of a benign international situation or a general pacifist stance, quite a socially useful one at that, it might be argued. What is socially (or socialistically?) non-useful about wanting to defend one's national integrity as best one can? As it stands the authors of *The Lucas Plan*, along with the majority of the Lucas shop stewards it would seem, adopt a somewhat moralistic attitude towards what is socially useful or not, mirroring the more general Left hostility towards arms production.

A further, interesting area discussed, in both books in this case, concerns workers' democracy in its various forms. What is clear, as Tomlinson argues in *The Unequal Struggle?*, is that the emphasis given to the size of enterprises is perhaps more pertinent in respect to effective democracy and accountability than it is with respect to traditional socialist worries about big business and monopoly market power. To organise effective internal democratic control of firms and enterprises and develop meaningful strategies of accountability might form the central argument for smaller enterprises rather than the supposed market abuse of large firms. One of the major problems confronting the Lucas Combine was the organisation of effective discussion and consultation across what was a geographically and economically disparate group of plants that made up the Lucas Group of companies. Large sections of British industry are typified by this kind of structure which seems to make little technical or productive sense. Such a structure is a legacy of the merger boom of the 1960s and the 1970s which was conducted largely for financial rather than for economic reasons. Faced with this and other constraints on the economy, it is probably the case that a very much more modest approach to what can be done within and through the capitalist enterprise needs to be adopted by socialists along the lines suggested in Tomlinson's book. Whilst both books are correctly hesitant about the adequacy of traditional nationalisation as a socialist objective, fresh approaches also need to be developed which do not uncritically endorse or fetishise 'workers' initiatives' either.

Grahame Thompson

LETTERS

DECENTRALISATION

Mike Rustin's article, 'Power To The Provinces' (January issue), was thoughtful and provocative. Although I disagreed with his position on Ireland, he is to be respected for taking up the question together with Wales and Scotland.

Also, it may be useful, to identify those, within the Labour Party, who are beginning to come to terms with the questions of decentralisation and democracy. I refer here to such groupings as the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. Although there is considerable disagreement on the question of proportional representation, on balance, I would be in favour of replacing our present electoral system, with one based on PR.

If the next election leads to a 'hung parliament', I wouldn't be surprised if this resulted in a coalition between the Tories and the Alliance, rather than one between Labour and the Alliance (to keep Thatcher out), as Mike suggests.

The SDP is beginning to show its true colours, witness the recent debate in parliament on nuclear weapons, when they voted with the Tories. If Thatcher is defeated, but not annihilated, at the next election, we could then see a Tory/Alliance government which rejects Thatcherism, and appeals to 'National Unity', in order to 'manage' the crisis.

Steve Rose, Preston

FEMALE EMPLOYMENT

Lynne Segal, in January's *Marxism Today*, argued that women did not seem in fact to be losing jobs more quickly than men during the current depression. She is dead right. So far as Wales is concerned, precisely the opposite is happening.

The Welsh working population reached its

peak in 1979, when 1,022,000 people were at work as workers, 55% of them in the service sector. Women were 40% of the total and 42% of the critical sectors of manufacturing and services, an increase of 8% since 1968.

By October 1982, the working population had fallen to 858,000, nearly 60% in services, a mere 34% in manufacturing. There were 357,000 women in this shrunken workforce: nearly 42% of the total and 43.7% of those in manufacturing and services. In the last few months of 1982, men's unemployment once more started to pull ahead and away from women's. At this moment, women are at least 44% of the workers at work in Wales in manufacturing and services.

A measure of the change: if the change-over to female labour continues at the rate it has been running since 1968, women will be a majority of the Welsh working class at work by the end of 1994; if, however, it runs at the speed it has attained during the Thatcher slump, women will be majority of the Welsh working class by the end of 1990, in eight years time.

Gwyn A Williams, Cardiff

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South East

● **Nick Spurrier**, 79 Whitstable Rd, Canterbury, Kent CT2 8EA. Tel 62764. Monthly lists of 2nd hand books on trade unions, Soviet Union, socialism, economic history. Books searched for.

● Copies of **Proletarian No. 1** on Economism, Tailism and the New Communist Party available from BM SPARK, London WC1M 3XX, price 40p including postage.

SCIENCE AND SOCIALISM CONFERENCE

Richard Clarke writes: This conference, mentioned in Notes, December MT, has been postponed. It will now take place on Saturday 5 March at Marx House, Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. It aims to examine the positive achievements of science in the socialist countries in comparison with the stagnation and distortion of science within capitalism in crisis, as well as to examine the very real problems of science as practised within socialist economies.

Speakers will include Zhores Medvedev and Julian Cooper. Admission will be £3.00 (£1 unwaged) in advance and £3.50 (£1.50 unwaged) at the door. More information is available from CP Science Committee, 16 St John Street, London EC1.

RAPE CRISIS CENTRE

Denise Vale writes: The London Rape Crisis Centre has recently moved. Their new number (24 hours) is 01-837 1600, and the office line is 01-278 3956. The address is RCRP, PO Box 69, London WC1X 9NJ. The Rape Crisis Centre runs a 24 hour telephone line for women and girls who have been raped or sexually assaulted. Any woman who wants to talk to another woman or needs legal or medical information can ring the centre any time, whether it is an emergency or not.

SOCIALIST EDUCATION POLICIES

John Kelly writes: Why has the Educational Alliance been so ineffective? How should unions respond to the New Training Initiative? Is the traditional university an outmoded institution? How should adult education be politicised? These are just some of the questions that will be explored at a one-day conference on Post-16 education policies at the University of London Students Union, Malet St, London on Saturday 12 February 1983. Organised by the Campaign for Higher Education, and the NATFHE and AUT Broad Lefts, the speakers will include: Mike Rustin author of *Comprehensive Education after 16* (Socialist Society), Philip Whitehead MP, Tommy Shepherd NUS, John Fisher TGWU tutor, Royden Harrison.

Write for details to: Campaign for Higher Education, c/o Department of Sociology, North East London Polytechnic, London.

HUNT ON CABLE TV

Loretta Loach writes: The latest book from the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom warns that the installation of cable technology will mean quick profits for a few city entrepreneur's based on a wave of

imports which will swamp those very information techniques which the Government sees as Britain's industrial hope of the future.

The authors, members of the Communications Group of Socialist Economists, argue that it is vital for the labour movement to develop a communications strategy and suggest that Labour controlled local authorities should develop proposals for democratic control over the range of activities within the communications sector. *Hunt on Cable TV — Chaos or Coherence* costs £1.95 and is available from CPBF, 9 Poland Street, London W1, Tel: 01-437 2795.

BALLOTS AND BULLETS

Mike Gatehouse writes: 'Ballots and Bullets,' a new and powerful documentary from the Salvadorian Film Institute is a scathing indictment of the fraudulent electoral process and sets the backdrop of the elections — massacres, army harassment and death squad threats against the popular opposition — to ask the question: how it is possible in this situation to hold truly democratic elections? The film makes an interesting analysis of Western media coverage of the elections and the pressures from the armed forces on Western journalists. 'Ballots and Bullets' VHS Video Cassette lasts 30 minutes. It is available for hire at £10 plus carriage from SFI Support Group, 36 Jackson Road, London N7, Tel: 01-609 3925.

The El Salvador Committee for Human Rights has also produced a 20 minute colour video about its work. It has the gruesome and dangerous task of finding, photographing and attempting to identify the bodies of people arrested by the security forces, which appear at a rate of 3-400 per month. This is available for £7.50, including postage from the El Salvador Committee for Human Rights, 21 Compton Terrace, London N1, Tel: 01-359 1836.

ISAAC DEUTSCHER MEMORIAL PRIZE

Mary Townsend writes: The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize is awarded annually in recognition of outstanding research and writing in the Marxist tradition of Isaac Deutscher. The 1982 prize was awarded to Geoffrey de Ste Croix for his work on *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (Duckworth pbk £15). Geoffrey de Ste Croix will give the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture in autumn 1983 (details to be published later). The prize for 1983 will be judged in May. Works for consideration should be submitted to The Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize c/o Lloyds Bank, 68 Warwick Square, London SW1.

STATUTORY SICK PAY

Shelley Adams writes: From next April most workers will not be entitled to State Sickness Benefit. Instead they will have to rely on their employer to pay them a new state benefit, Statutory Sick Pay (SSP). Unless unions negotiate sick schemes the introduction of SSP could mean

- * less money for workers during illness
- * stricter control over sickness and absences
- * more sickness related dismissals

The Labour Research Department have published a pamphlet which provides a straightforward guide to SSP for all workers. The guide gives information needed by union representatives for the protection of their members when SSP is introduced. *Statutory Sick Pay* is available from LRD 18 Blackfriars Road, London SE1.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

John Warr is a barrister.

Paul Ensor works at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University.

Phil Jones teaches law at the Polytechnic of Central London.

Mark Doyle is a journalist working on *West Africa* magazine.

Sarah Benton is a journalist with the *New Statesman*.

Sally Davison was formerly a national organiser of CND and is a member of the Communist Party peace advisory committee.

Helen John is a founding member of the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp.

Joan Ruddock is chairperson of CND.

Chris Pond is director of the Low Pay Unit.

Dave Cook is a member of the Communist Party's National Executive Committee.

Peter Hain is prospective Labour parliamentary candidate for Putney.

Harold Immanuel works for the Anti Nuclear Campaign.

Doug Cook is vice chairman of Nalco's National Health Committee and a member of the TUC Health Committee.

Peter Ball is a freelance writer.

Brian McNair works on the media at Glasgow University.

Sarah Lefanu is an editor with the Women's Press.

Maria Loftus is a teacher.

Hilary Land is reader in social administration at Bristol University.

Grahame Thompson works at the Open University.

Martin Weegman researches on psychoanalysis.

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